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The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Issue 73a

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 26, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. Holy Father and Great Creator, guide us in our discussions and in our deliberations that they may help us shape a positive future for all whom we serve. May they also remind us of the privileges we share in this land, where we have no fear of oppression, where we have abundant food and water and all of the necessities, unlike other places in our history. Amen.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met and which I first alluded to yesterday.

Mr. Louis Davies Hyndman, OC, QC
July 1, 1935, to November 24, 2013

The Speaker: For almost 19 years Mr. Lou Hyndman served as a member of this Assembly for Edmonton West and then Edmonton Glenora. Mr. Hyndman's career was dedicated to public service. He was a lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve), an aide-de-camp for Lieutenant Governor J. Percy Page, and a distinguished lawyer. Mr. Hyndman was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in 1967 and subsequently held the positions of Minister of Education from 1971 through 1975, Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs from 1975 to 1979, and Provincial Treasurer from 1979 to 1986. Mr. Hyndman was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1976 and was named an officer of the Order of Canada in 1992. A born and raised Edmontonian, Mr. Hyndman also served as chancellor of the University of Alberta from 1994 to 1998.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask us all to remember the hon. Lou Hyndman in any way you may have known him. Grant unto him, O Lord, rest eternal, and may light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us today in the Speaker's gallery are Mary Hyndman, spouse of Lou; Peter Hyndman, son; and joining them are additional members of the family and their friends: Pamela Parker, Samantha Parker, Melanie McCallum, Joan Pitfield, Bonnie Hope, and Judge Ken Hope. To you we extend our deepest condolences. With this tribute just read and with the applause you're about to hear, please know that our thoughts and prayers are with all of you. [Standing ovation]

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some special guests that are seated in your gallery. I would ask our guests to remain standing as I introduce all of you. First is Ms Olesia Luciw-Andryjowycz, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council; Ms Daria Luciw, past president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council; Mr. Peter Dackiw, Ukrainian youth unity centre; Yaroslav Szewchuk, Ukrainian youth unity centre; Dr. Roman Petryshyn, Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre, Grant

MacEwan University; Dr. Bohdan Klid, Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta; Father Rauliuk and Dobrodiyka Rauliuk, St. Michael's Ukrainian Orthodox church; Mr. Marshall Kachmar, Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John; and, of course, Mr. Leonid Korownyk, survivor, and his wife, Mrs. Anna Korownyk; and Warren Singh, key researcher in 2008 in relationship to the Holodomor act, which is marking its fifth anniversary. Please give our guests who are standing our traditional and warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll now commence with the introduction of school groups, starting with Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 44 grade 9 high school students from Cochrane, Alberta. They're here visiting the Legislature today and the University of Alberta tomorrow. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to rise today and welcome a wonderful group of students from Falun elementary school in the constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon. These 40 bright grades 5 and 6 students along with their teachers have toured our Legislature, and we've just had a picture. They're here to learn about our government. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?

If not, let us proceed with other guests, beginning with the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of 12 staff from Alberta Energy's electricity and sustainable energy division. As you would understand, they perform good work on behalf of Albertans and they advise me well. I'm very pleased to welcome them to the Legislature Building today as they participate in a public service orientation tour. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Wellness, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to introduce Dr. Brian Gushaty and Deb Manz, registrar and CEO respectively of the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors. Brian and Deb are dedicated to the practice of chiropractic care in this province and are great ambassadors for their profession. They are here today to support the tabling of their college's annual report, and at this time I would ask our distinguished guests, Brian and Deb, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly four

individuals: Louise Large, child and family services technician co-ordinator, Treaty 6 First Nations; Brenda Joly, executive director, Treaty 6 First Nations; Arlene Thunder, children and family youth co-ordinator, Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta; and Victor Horseman, grand chief liaison, Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta. These individuals are deeply concerned about the safety and conditions of First Nations children and all Alberta children who receive care in child and family services. They are here today hoping to hear answers to their concerns. I would ask everyone in the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Glenrose school. The Glenrose school offers multimodal mental health rehabilitation for students from K to 12 in conjunction with a school program. The program is staffed with educators who have additional training and experience in mental health care. The students are visiting the Legislature today to see our government in action. Attending are Lisa Lemoine, Lasha Luciwi, Beth Shedden, a lifelong friend Ginny Hamilton, Shannon Napora, Doug Cels, and 11 of the students. I would like them to please rise and receive the traditional greeting of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for a supplemental introduction.

Mrs. Leskiw: Yes. I forgot to introduce one person. I'd like Motria Dackiw to stand up. She's the wife of Peter Dackiw, that I introduced earlier. [Remarks in Ukrainian] Sorry that I forgot.

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

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce Heather Workman. Heather's a good friend of mine from my constituency. She loves to make people happy, including in her work at the front door of the Old Strathcona market painting the faces of children, including my grandchildren at times. She's an advocate against domestic violence and ran as a candidate in our ward in the Gold Bar area. Heather, if you can stand up and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

Holodomor Memorial Day

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a province with strong historical ties to Ukraine. This is apparent to any Albertan who has visited Vegreville's largest pysanka in the world, Glendon's largest perogy, or spent a day exploring the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village museum east of Edmonton. Ukrainian pioneers first settled in our beautiful province over 120 years ago, and Ukrainian Albertans continue to play an integral role in the development of Alberta today.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege for me to rise to acknowledge the fifth anniversary of Bill 37, the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act. Passed unanimously in 2008, the act commemorates the millions of innocent

men, women, and children in rural Soviet Ukraine who died from a barbaric, man-made famine enforced by Joseph Stalin's totalitarian regime between 1932 and '33. Known as the Holodomor, which means extermination by means of starvation in Ukrainian, it makes one pause to think that this horrific act of genocide happened only 80 years ago.

The stories are haunting. Ukrainian farmers and peasants were forced to fulfill exorbitant government quotas that left them without food for themselves and their families. Those who refused saw their crops, livestock, and valuable seed grain confiscated. Those who tried to keep so much as a handful of grain or a few stalks of wheat were arrested or executed. Stalin's military patrolled the border to prevent starving Ukrainians from leaving the country in search of food. It is one of the darkest chapters in human history, that must never be repeated and must always be remembered.

In Alberta the fourth Saturday of every November is proclaimed Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day. On November 23 Ukrainian communities gathered to commemorate and honour the fallen victims and those who survived. It is an opportunity to give thanks for the democratic freedoms and human rights we have here in Canada and reminds us of the role we must play to ensure a bright and inclusive future for all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Deaths of Children in Care

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday was the darkest day I've experienced in my short time in this Legislature. It was the day we as a province learned the painfully raw and unvarnished truth about how elements of our children's services system are failing those it is in place to protect.

We found out that the number of vulnerable children, many with serious and untreated mental health conditions, who have died while in government care is dramatically higher than has ever been reported. Since 1999 there have been 89 – 89 – deaths involving children in care that were never reported, each one an innocent life, each one kept a secret.

If there's one aspect of this story that disturbs me the most, Mr. Speaker, that is it. Not only were these oftentimes horrific deaths swept under the rug, the government fought tooth and nail for four years to keep the record secret. Yesterday, when the news broke, the government had an opportunity to demonstrate real-life leadership. They had an opportunity to tackle this issue head-on and champion the cause of getting to the bottom of it.

Perhaps naively I thought they might just do it. Instead, this government does what it always does: dodge, deflect, and deny. The Human Services minister downplayed the issue, first saying that the number of deaths was, quote, not significant, unquote, and then inexplicably said that the deaths were not preventable. The documents this government fought so hard to keep sealed clearly contradict him.

Here's the point. This has exposed a culture of deflecting blame and obscuring the truth that has seized this government. It is why these deaths went unreported, it's why the government fought to keep them secret, and it's why the minister reflexively shifted into spin mode yesterday when the news broke. This has to change, and until it does, the system that should be protecting our most vulnerable and defenseless will continue to be shrouded in secrecy,

and this government will continue to be plagued by problems of its own making.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Government Achievements

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, last weekend our party met in convention and affirmed our support for our leader and the Premier of this province. I was amazed by the large and culturally diverse number, some 1,600, who attended this annual meeting. We're a broad-based party that share common mainstream values with each other and the people of this province.

The casual observer would see everything from staunch fiscal conservatives to long-haired hippies. Well, actually, that was me, Mr. Speaker. Themes emerged from the meetings. For example, the people of Alberta want our government to continue to build Alberta into the future, led by our Premier, and they want us to start now to get ready for the next election.

Mr. Speaker, as a chartered accountant, as a certified management accountant I want to commend our Finance minister and President of Treasury Board on the job done as a steward over our economic assets. The province is in great hands. I know that the Premier has said "live within our means." The Finance minister is delivering that. With the fiscal reality of the devastating floods in front of us, with continued pressures on the valuation of our resource assets, this Finance minister delivered a positive but cautionary second-quarter report today.

No financial statement is easy to read, Mr. Speaker, but I want to assure Albertans that the move to an operating plan, a savings plan, and a capital plan is a great one. Now Albertans can see what funds are being spent and, therefore, are necessary to build Alberta. They can tell quickly what the savings are.

There is a reason, Mr. Speaker, that people are flocking to Alberta. They share our set of common values. They like our progressive and conservative history, and they love that we're focusing on building this great province in the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the next election will be interesting, indeed. We're united on this side of the House, so I say to our leader with confidence on behalf of our team: let's keep building Alberta right through to 2016.

Speaker's Ruling Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's not the custom in this House to interrupt members when they're giving private members' statements, and it's not the custom for points of order to be raised, and it's not the custom for the Speaker to interject. But when you started off by dealing with internal party matters, hon. member, you know that you stand in violation of one of our rules, and that is to not bring internal party matters into the House. You recovered quickly on this occasion. We'll be mindful of your next.

1:50 Oral Question Period

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

Deaths of Children in Care

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we learned from media reports yesterday of the sad and distressing news that the number of deaths of

children in government care is nearly three times what official statistics say. This is a very serious issue, and Albertans need to be assured that children in government care are being given the attention they need in every single case. Will the Premier agree today to launch a full public inquiry?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, as a parent, as an Albertan any death of any child in this province is an incredible tragedy. We have to make sure that we're doing everything we can to protect children, particularly children in care. That is why our minister has taken the steps that he has in the past two years since we formed government to ensure that we are publicly accountable for every issue that comes up, that we have a child advocate that is independent of the government, that we have a quality advisory council that includes health care experts from the Stollery and the University of Calgary to deal with child protection. We are committed to doing everything we need to do working in partnership with the opposition to make this situation better for all children.

Ms Smith: Sounds like everything except a full public inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The government claims the large discrepancy between the official number of deaths and the actual number of deaths is due to how they account for "natural causes." However, the media reports clearly indicate that this does not, in fact, fully explain the discrepancy between the two sets of numbers. Even with 68 deaths attributed to natural causes, that still leaves the government unable to account for 21 deaths of children in their care. A full public inquiry would provide some clarity on this sad and disturbing issue. Will the Premier commit today to launch a full public inquiry?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, the work that is done in the department of children's services and has been done over many years by many ministers, including the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, has been about ensuring that we protect children. It is very important that we understand exactly what is going on. That is why we have an independent child advocate. That is why we have a quality assurance council. We are committed to ensuring that we continue to make the system better. That is fundamentally important. We need to bring people together to talk about this. Our minister today has offered that we need to do that, and we hope to work together with everyone to protect all children even better in the system.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we'll take him up on that, but we still need a full public inquiry. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek agrees that we need a full public inquiry as well.

On the issue of natural causes there also appears to be some confusion about what actually constitutes a natural cause. A news report today details the tragic story of a baby placed in a bassinette which was improperly set up. The bassinette collapsed, and the child was killed. This was initially attributed to a sleep death; however, prior to 2010 no fatality inquiries were done into sleep deaths, which raises questions about whether statistics about natural causes are accurate. Will the Premier commit today to having a full public inquiry into this matter?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member will know is that we have a very thorough process which involves the medical examiner. Every death of a child in care with Human Services is reported to the medical examiner, and the medical examiner investigates. We now have a Child and Youth Advocate that is independent of the Legislature. Every death or serious injury of a child in care or subject to any programs of the department is

referred to the Child and Youth Advocate, and he has full access to all the electronic records and full access to all the information in the department. All deaths of children in care are reported to the quality assurance council. So there are three ways in which there's a complete and thorough review of any death of a child in care.

The Speaker: The hon. leader. Second main set of questions.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's not what the Child and Youth Advocate says in his report, and it also isn't the case prior to 2012, which is what we're asking about.

Many of the deaths which the government characterizes as being of natural causes might well have been fully preventable. For years the government did not feel compelled to fully report the deaths of children in government care. Will the Premier acknowledge that simply defining these deaths as being of natural causes does not provide Albertans with the assurances that they're looking for, and will she call a full public inquiry?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I became the Justice minister five years ago. One of the reasons I got into public service and one of the reasons I decided to run for leader is that I thought we needed to do a better job of ensuring that we were taking care of kids in care, and that's because of the experience that I had before I came to this House. The work that we have put in place, that this government has put in place, since we were formed two years ago – an independent child advocate, children first legislation, ensuring that caregivers and people involved in the system can share information, ensuring we have a quality assurance council and that all deaths are reported – is better than what we have ever seen before. We are proud of it. We're going to continue to improve the system, and we'd like to do that with the help of the opposition.

Ms Smith: Better, Mr. Speaker, but still not good enough.

We learned today that a significant number of babies who die while in care die as a result of unsafe sleeping practices. It appears that some foster parents are not provided with adequate training on where and how children in their care should sleep. Furthermore, infant deaths while sleeping are rarely reviewed. Bearing in mind that the vast majority of Alberta's foster parents are caring, compassionate, and dedicated individuals, will the Premier commit to improving the training foster parents receive on the care of infants, and will she call a full public inquiry to make sure that all recommendations have been implemented?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member should know that we have actually followed up on recommendations from past fatality reviews and from past investigations. One of those was to do a better job of ensuring that foster parents know about safe sleeping arrangements, et cetera. An example of what has happened is what's called safe sleep. It's putting reviews into action. We developed safe babies training for foster parents and kinship caregivers who care for infants that provides valuable information about caring for infants and the specialized care required by babies prenatally exposed to substances. It has been incorporated into training modules and information for caregivers, including a chapter on infant sleep, with sections on sleep positions, reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, and Alberta safe sleep guidelines, and every . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, this minister has no credibility. Yesterday the minister said in response to a media question that the number of children who died while in the care of the government was, quote, not significant, unquote. Well, I've already pointed out that there are at least 21 deaths unaccounted for. Today's report reveals that infants in care have a three times higher mortality rate than those infants who are not in care and 78 per cent of the children who have died in care since 1999 are aboriginal. Does the Premier agree with her minister that the deaths can be characterized as not significant?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member is a past master at taking words out of context even when she wasn't there to hear the context. She reads the paper and automatically uses the language in the way that she wants to characterize it. What's really true is that every child is important in this province to this Premier, to this government, and to this minister. Every child is significant. What we were talking about yesterday was with respect to tracking recommendations from reports. We don't have that many reports, and we don't have that many recommendations. I can assure the hon. member we know about each and every one of those recommendations, where they've gone, and what we're doing about them. We are implementing those recommendations. We have a very good track record on that.

Ms Smith: I think we'd all prefer to see a full public inquiry to prove that point, Mr. Speaker.

Resource Revenue Projections

Ms Smith: Today the Finance minister released his second-quarter update, and he is proudly selling it as good news. It's hard to get excited about that because the government has a pretty poor record of revenue forecasting. Usually the bitumen spread is low in the summer, then it goes up in the winter, and revenues go down. This government budgeted on the price of western Canada select oil at \$68.50. Throughout the second quarter the price was very much higher, but it's been very much lower for most of the third quarter. Doesn't the Premier worry that her Finance minister's celebrations might be just a tad premature?

Ms Redford: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that this Finance minister has done. He has put in place a responsible fiscal plan that ensures that today, seven months after we went through some difficult budget decisions, we made the right decisions to ensure that we could stand up and support people in southern Alberta that were impacted by floods in a way that was fiscally responsible and ensure that we could put those funds to people in communities.

Now, we've heard before the Leader of the Opposition speculate on the price of oil. Lots of people in Alberta do that. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the work that our Department of Finance does, our Department of Energy does, and our minister does has consistently led to forecasting that works.

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Smith: Except for that \$6 billion hole the Premier discovered last December.

Yesterday western Canada select oil was \$7 below the government's target. In the last month it got to almost \$15 below the government's target. The Premier should realize that good news in Q2 is very likely to be offset by bad news in Q3 and Q4. Now that the Premier's leadership review is over, instead of trotting out new

spending plans, shouldn't she be putting her efforts into creating a plan to actually balance the budget?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't change the budget every day that oil changes, as the hon. member opposite seems to indicate we should. Previous to this second-quarter report that I did today, at times western Canada select was \$12 above what we put in the budget. I can inform the hon. member and all members in this House today that the year-to-date price on WTI is \$99. The year-to-date differential that we're looking at is around \$24. The WTI number is higher than our budget. The differential number is lower than our budget. I was cautioning today because we are seeing that differential spread. We're going to stick to the plan that put us in the right position in the first place.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, they talk about operational surpluses, capital deficits, borrowing to save, debt equals hope, and lots of new borrowing. Albertans are rightly confused by these ridiculous budget tricks. The Auditor General called this government out on its accounting sleight of hand for having three budgets. Why won't this Premier go back to the tried-and-true financial reporting practices that made Alberta's fiscal books the envy of the country for the last 20 years?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the Wildrose is in the past. I quote from page 6 of the Auditor General's report of just this October.

The fact that none of our auditor's reports on financial statements contained a reservation of opinion means that Albertans can be sure they are receiving high quality information from the government on the province's actual financial performance.

Mr. Speaker, there is a reason why 105,000 people moved to our province, 39,000 this last quarter, a record. There's a reason why they came. It's because this is the best place in the world to create your future and the strongest financial position in North America.

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

Deaths of Children in Care

(continued)

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that government is doing its best to keep the facts about the deaths of children in government care from coming to light. It's pulling out all the stops to deflect attention. You'd almost say that the minister said that these deaths were insignificant. You'd almost say that he wanted to blame families and front-line staff, but Alberta Liberals are not going to let this minister get away with it. The facts are clear, and they're staggering. One in 10 children in care is a baby. The babies account for more than 1 in 3 deaths of children in care. Fifty-seven of those 145 that died were babies. Experts say that these were preventable. To the Premier: why are so many babies dying needlessly in your government's care?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue, and we're all concerned about this issue. It's why our minister has taken the steps that he has even subsequent to the work that we've done in the past two years. This has turned into a debate where the opposition stands up and is morally outraged by the circumstance, and they should be. We all are. But the way that we resolve this is to come together and work to make the system even better than it is. We have asked for the opposition to come to the table to work with us because the outcome that we need is to ensure that all

children are even safer than they are today and that we avoid these tragedies. We've asked for that partnership.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the opposition are fully in favour of working with this government and anyone else who wants to improve the lives of children, but far from doing the right thing – what's necessary here are answers. We have 147 dead children, Premier. It's time to call an independent, public judicial inquiry. The families of these children don't need a round-table; they need answers. The facts are horrific. Nine per cent of Alberta's children are First Nations, but they represent 78 per cent of the kids that died in care, yet they get much less funding at a time when there's much more need. Premier, your government is changing the First Nations children in our province. Why will you not call . . . ?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, there was actually a recent public fatality inquiry with respect to an aboriginal child in care who died. It was a tragic circumstance. One of the recommendations that came out of that was that the funding issue relative to aboriginal children on-reserve needs to be looked into. The hon. member will know that the federal government funds on-reserve, that the provincial government funds off-reserve. But one of the things that I have said to each of the treaty chiefs that I've met with over this fall, and I've met with all of them, is that we have to set aside jurisdiction and look to the best interests of the children. They agreed. We agreed. Will you agree?

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, when an airplane loaded with passengers crashes, passengers die. We call an independent judicial inquiry to find out why the airplane crashed. The children, family, and youth services system of this province: liken that to an airplane that has crashed. All these children have died; many have been injured and needlessly suffered. My question is: Premier, why will you not call a public inquiry? The public and these families need answers. Can you please stand up, Premier, and tell us why as a lawyer you won't call an inquiry?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I think on this issue it is tremendously important in this House to remember what we need to try to achieve. The outcome is to improve the system every single day with all of the people that are working in the system to protect children, who are incredibly vulnerable before they come into the system, in a way that we can ensure that they have the best opportunity to excel. Sometimes there are tragedies, and that is exactly what they are. We cannot exploit these tragedies. We must improve the system. We've asked for the opposition to help us do that, and we hope that they will.

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

Child Poverty

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Nearly 30 years ago in his last speech to this Assembly NDP leader Grant Notley said that this government's failure to deal with the desperation of so many thousands of Albertans had led to the suicide of Richard Cardinal, a Métis youth in government care. Thirty years later too many children, most of whom are poor and aboriginal, are still dying in government care. Will the Premier agree to a public inquiry into the deaths of children in government care that specifically investigates the link between child poverty and the likelihood that children will end up in government care? If not, why not?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader makes a very good point and has asked a very good question. There is no doubt that when we have children in vulnerable situations and living in poverty, families are at risk and children are at risk. That is why this government has made a commitment to end child poverty, has introduced a social policy framework that we are working on with community leaders and not-for-profit agencies across this province to ensure that we can do a better job. He will know today that Public Interest Alberta has issued a report that notes that we have actually seen reductions in poverty rates in Alberta, that we continue to see less people on the social support rolls. That is good news. We will do more. We would like to work with the opposition.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, that report actually says that the government has done too little to end child poverty.

The leader of the NDP said three decades ago that the government's failure to deal with the desperation of Albertans living in poverty and the desperation of Albertans in government care had been ignored for too many years. In the last election this Premier promised to end child poverty, a measure which would hopefully see fewer children in need of government care. Instead, her government cut funding for rent supplements, child care grants, and income support, all things vitally needed to keep families and children out of poverty. To the Premier: why did you break your promise to Albertans' children?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what in fact we are doing is keeping our promise to Albertans and to Albertans' children. We are keeping that promise by talking with communities about how we work together to ensure that every family has the tools that they need to be successful and that every child has what they need to succeed. We've talked about the social policy framework, we've worked through the Together We Raise Tomorrow, and we're working with communities to have an appropriate plan. But while we're doing that, we haven't stopped helping individual Albertans on a day-to-day basis with income support, with AISH, with whatever they need to be successful. This is a project of success, but there is more work to be done.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the government has asked for the opposition's help. I'll provide a little bit of advice to them, and I want to ask these questions. Will they restore cuts to income supplements? Will they restore cuts to family income support? Will they restore the cuts that they made to antipoverty programs in the last budget? Will they actually take steps, backed up with real money, to end child poverty in this province?

Mr. Hancock: Again, Mr. Speaker, this government has actually increased support for AISH recipients by \$500. We've increased income supports to individual Albertans. The reason the budget for income support to individual Albertans went down is not because we cut the benefits to individual Albertans but because more Albertans have an opportunity to actively participate in the economy of this province because of the other good things that this government is doing. We're creating a solid place for Albertans to live and to raise their families. We're supporting those families where they need support. We're helping them with

skill development where they need it. There's more work to be done.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That's it for preambles to your supplementaries. Let's go on with Calgary-Shaw, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mental Health Services for Children in Care

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago I asked a series of questions about the Child and Youth Advocate's most recent report, that went unanswered. Since then we've been made aware of a terrible trend in the system, the dramatic underreporting of deaths of children and youth in care. One of the minister's justifications for inaction has been to remind us that the Child and Youth Advocate is now independent and that therefore the system is completely fine: nothing to see here. If all is well, why, as the Child and Youth Advocate has clearly indicated, are traumatized children and youth coming into government care not receiving the mental health supports they so desperately need?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, there are some very good recommendations that the Child and Youth Advocate has made, and I'm working through the three reports that he's given us. In fact, I have them on my desk for review.

We do have something which this government has recognized as a very serious and important issue, and that is the mental health of children and the supports for children with mental health issues. I've been working with the Minister of Health and with the Minister of Education to make sure the supports are in place not just for children in care but for all children. That's a very important issue in this province, as it is in many other places in North America, and that's a very important issue to be addressed in an even better way than we have to this date.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, they've been working on this for 10 years.

Given the news of the last couple of days, namely the revelation that these children are dying in care at a much higher rate than the government will admit and that many have mental health issues that went untreated, does the minister accept that there is a correlation between these deaths and the lack of appropriate mental health supports for these children in care, and what is your ministry doing about it?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I need to go back to his suggestion that the children are dying at a higher rate. That's not true. What in fact has happened is that prior to 2012 we did not report on children who died of natural causes and accidental death that were not impacted by a third party in an inappropriate way. There were investigations, and medical examiners and others determined that it wasn't necessary to go further. Since 2012 all deaths of children in care are being reported. We think that's important. That's an extremely important piece.

Mental health is an extremely important issue not just for children in care but for all children and youth and, in fact, for all Albertans. That's an issue we're addressing.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate has done everything he can to sound the alarm on health supports for children in care, mental health supports. His warnings should send a chill down this government's spine. Again to the minister: when are you going to show some leadership, take some responsibility, and admit that this is still a major problem in your ministry?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've received the Child and Youth Advocate's reports recently. We are reviewing them. The recommendations are very important recommendations. But I don't need the report to tell me that mental health for children is a very important issue. In fact, we've been addressing that issue. We have programs in place. We're putting more resources in place to do that, and we've been working very closely with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to make sure that access issues are addressed.

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

Government Spending

Mr. Quadri: Mr. Speaker, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance delivered the second-quarter update today. As he said himself, it's apparent we have turned the corner and revenues are higher than expected. It's good news for Albertans. My question to the Minister of Finance: can we expect to see spending increase as a result of this positive trend?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that we are only halfway through the year, as we alluded to earlier in question period. We are seeing improvements. There's no question about that. But as I said in the press scrum earlier today, we have a long way to go. It is prudent fiscal management that put us in this strong position. Holding true on wage growth – population growth is a challenge for us. Flood recovery is obviously going to be a very significant challenge for us as we move through the next quarters. But it does show that the discipline that we put in place is getting results, and we are showing good results at this point.

Mr. Quadri: Mr. Speaker, given that growth pressures in many of Alberta's communities have resulted in a need for additional infrastructure and services, what steps have been taken to manage expenditures so provincial dollars go where they're needed the most?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, as we've talked about in this House many times, the capital plan is something that we are putting a lot of resources towards. We're talking a lot about the amount that we have to build. In order to do that, we had to have the zero per cent increase on our operational expenditures. We had to keep that very, very tight. The second-quarter results have shown that that was the appropriate direction. The MLA pay freeze and the continuation of the current and proposed MLA freeze, management pay freezes, a 10 per cent reduction in the staff, the doctors' agreement, the teachers' agreement: we have got to hold the line on all of these expectations, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Quadri: Mr. Speaker, even though the second-quarter results are better than expected, how can critics continue to suggest that Alberta is in a dire financial position and that government financial mismanagement is to blame?

Mr. Horner: You know, Mr. Speaker, these claims, unfortunately, are unfounded and, frankly, somewhat irresponsible because we are in the strongest financial position of any jurisdiction in North America. It isn't me that's saying that. It's the credit-rating agencies. It's the financial agencies. It's the banks. It's all of the people that supposedly would be advising a finance critic in the opposition, but evidently they're not. We are the only province in the country with net assets. We have a solid economic foundation.

In the last two years we've led all other provinces in economic growth. People are coming here because this is the place to be, and it's because of our strong financial position.

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

Mr. Anderson: Everyone's lost but him, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Borrowing

Mr. Anderson: Today's second-quarter update was the same old story: record revenues, more debt, more deficits, and questionable accounting. Despite a record bump in revenue, the consolidated cash deficit remains in the \$3 billion to \$4 billion range with at least \$17 billion in debt to be borrowed by 2016. Yet, incredibly, the Finance minister, echoing the management team of my beloved Edmonton Oilers says, and I quote, we have turned a corner. Minister, how is a \$4 billion consolidated budget deficit and \$17 billion in debt by 2016 turning the corner?

Mr. Horner: You know, Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting the other night in debate in the House when the hon. members from the wild alliance were talking about: why don't you balance the way the federal government – my apologies. The Wildrose Alliance, Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

The Speaker: Withdraw that right now, and we'll carry on.

Mr. Horner: I do.

Mr. Speaker, the other day in the debate here they were talking about: "Why don't you balance the way the federal government does? Why don't you take a page out of the federal government's books?" Are they suggesting that the federal government will not be balanced until the day that they stop borrowing for either infrastructure or their deficit? Nobody does that.

Mr. Anderson: So sad, Minister.

Given that the CEO of AIMCo, who oversees the heritage fund and is an expert market investor, is quoted just a few days ago saying that he believes the risks are high that oil prices will sink to the \$70-a-barrel range or lower in the next five years and given that you can't stay out of debt or even balance the budget with prices at over \$100 a barrel, Minister, when will you admit that you and your Premier's fiscal mismanagement is not only burying us in debt today, it is risking fiscal disaster in the not-too-distant future if oil prices decrease as he has predicted?

2:20

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I toured the province again this year in my budget deliberations, and what I discovered is that Albertans deal with their finances in a very similar way to the way we are doing today. They go and they buy a house, and they get a mortgage on that house because that's the appropriate financial tool to use. They build an RRSP or perhaps they're putting money into their pension because they know they should save for the future. What they also know is that you don't buy your groceries with your credit card, and we're not doing that. As much as the hon. members from the opposition would try to convince Albertans that that's what we're doing, that is not what we're doing. We're borrowing for the capital that is the schools, the hospitals, and the roads for all Albertans for today and tomorrow.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, they're not borrowing groceries on their credit card; they're mortgaging their house to borrow.

Given that the Premier promised during the last election that she would not go into debt and given that we are on pace this year to almost match or even break the all-time record for resource revenues yet will still be borrowing \$17 billion by 2016, Minister, how can you or this Premier look Albertans in the eye and say that you can be trusted to keep your promises? No one believes you anymore. Do you understand why?

Mr. Horner: First of all, the reason that it is in the forecast as record revenues is because we actually booked the revenue that we hoped to receive from the federal government of some \$3.1 billion. It would be interesting if the hon. members would actually read what's in there. But, Mr. Speaker, I can honestly look Albertans in the eye and tell them that we are borrowing for capital just like they do for their house and their warehouse and their business because they need the school, they need the road, they need the hospital today, not some time down the road when we cut \$5 billion out of our operating budget.

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

Public-sector Pension Plans

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of my constituents have expressed alarm regarding the recent proposed changes to a number of our province's public-service pension plans. Many cite second-hand information from friends, the news, and other sources. These constituents have committed their careers to Albertans. Many want to take early retirement and now believe the rug has been pulled out from under them. My question is to the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. Why are changes being made to these pension plans?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's pension plans were designed for a different workforce in a different era. Three decades ago government was trying to move older workers out of the workforce in order to make room for baby boomers that were coming in. Today we're facing worker shortages. It simply doesn't make a lot of sense to incent people to leave early. Currently the plans have no way to address funding shortfalls but to keep increasing the contributions that both the member makes and the employer makes. It's simply not sustainable. We have a 7 and a half billion dollar unfunded liability we need to deal with. We have to deal with people that are living a lot longer once they're retired. The demographic has changed. Life expectancy has changed. The number of contributors has changed.

Mr. Dorward: Minister, could you please clarify exactly what the proposed changes are? Some of the information out there is true, and some isn't.

Mr. Horner: You know, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note because one of the things that is difficult is when folks in the opposition or other stakeholders decide to try to scare Albertans or to promote fear to try to change their minds.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that the changes that we're proposing will only apply to benefits earned after 2015, so benefits that members have already earned and earn up to the end of 2015 are not affected. Core benefits are protected under our proposals. The changes that we're proposing are moderate. We're proposing to remove early retirement subsidies and move to a targeted COLA of 50 per cent. They are a very balanced approach.

Mr. Dorward: Is there a possibility that those pension reforms could be reviewed at a later date, possibly to incorporate new ideas? Clearly, many Albertans have raised concerns regarding public pensions.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that's out there that is also false is that the decision has been made. The decision has not been made. We have put some proposals on the table based on consultation that we've had over the last year. We received input from all of the plans' boards. However, I have to tell you that they didn't agree. They didn't agree on the things that needed to be done. Leadership was required to provide sustainability to defined benefit plans, and this government and this Premier are providing that leadership.

The Speaker: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, you had a point of order at 2:24 during the first supplemental. It's been noted.

Let's move on. Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Deaths of Children in Care (continued)

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, with respect to 145 children dying in care, this minister said a few minutes ago, "We don't have that many reports, and we don't have that many recommendations." Why, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it's because the majority of those 145 were determined to be, through appropriate investigation, deaths of children by natural causes, and the circumstances around those deaths were investigated. We have fatality review reports where that is appropriate. We still have a number of fatality reviews to happen, because fatality reviews happen after all criminal investigations and court actions have been taken, so there are a number of outstanding reports, presumably, to come when those fatality reviews happen. But that's . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, the act says that any child in care, any person in care should have priority for a fatality review, yet a very small proportion of these children have gone into a fatality review. Why is that?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the medical examiner will review a death to determine what has happened in that circumstance, and if the child has died of natural causes, he still brings that to the attention of the Fatality Review Board, but the Fatality Review Board, which consists of a doctor, a lawyer, and a member of the public, reviews those incidents and determines whether it's appropriate to go forward for a fatality review. There's a very thorough process of consideration with respect to whether a further investigation needs to happen in any incident of death with respect to a child in care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister has indicated how much they try to learn from incidents such as the deaths in care, yet the staff tell me that there is no systematic review of deaths or communication of deaths and lessons to the front lines. When and how is this being done, Mr. Minister? What are you covering up from the staff?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, we report and are required to report the death or serious injury of any child in care to the Child and Youth Advocate, and he has the full powers of a commissioner under the Public Inquiries Act. He has full access to information from the department, and he has the full authority to conduct a review. We report the serious injuries or death of a child to the quality assurance council, and they look for systemic issues arising out of that. The medical examiner is required to review every death of a child in care, a child under Human Services, and then the Fatality Review Board reviews that to determine whether a fatality review should be recommended.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, after a four-year legal battle with this government the public now knows the number of children who have died in care since 1999. What we still don't know is the number of kids who died while receiving protective services during the same period. That's a major gap in historical information that this government is willing to share with Albertans, and it needs to be corrected today. So to the minister, very straightforward: can you tell this Assembly how many children have died while receiving protective services over the past 14 years? And if not, why not?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that would require a historical review. I don't have that information at the tip of my fingers today. But I can tell you that we publicly disclose, as of 2012, the death of any child in care. We review every serious injury or death. We provide the information on that to the quality assurance council and to the Child and Youth Advocate. The Child and Youth Advocate has the full ability to have access to all of the information he needs and the powers of a commissioner under our Public Inquiries Act. The medical examiner reviews every incident of any child involved in the Human Services department, including the children that the hon. member is talking about, and has the opportunity to report to a Fatality Review Board.

Ms Notley: Forty-one years after you guys became government, you finally started counting all of the deaths? That is outrageous.

Given that even though eight kids under age five died while receiving protective services last year and only one of those deaths will proceed to a fatality inquiry and none of those deaths will be reviewed by the children's advocate, not even the one that the advocate describes as having died due to neglect, how can the minister possibly say, as he did yesterday, that the decrease in investigations of children's deaths is a good thing?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I've just recounted twice the number of ways in which an investigation into a child's death occurs, and each of those people to whom the death is reported has a duty of care, a duty to investigate to determine what more needs to be done. If they determine that nothing more needs to be done because a child died of natural causes or for whatever other reason, then I assume that they have carried out their duty and they're not going further with an inquiry. Fewer inquiries means we're on the right track, we're doing the right thing, and that the majority of those children are dying of natural causes.

2:30

Ms Notley: For 40 years you made assumptions, and for 40 years that was wrong.

Given that of the 20 deaths and serious injuries of children last year only five of those tragedies will be investigated by the advocate or through a fatality review and given that each child who is a victim of these tragedies deserves the full investigative attention of the government, who is responsible for them, will the

minister commit to changing the legislation to ensure that every death or serious injury is investigated, or do those deaths and serious injuries simply not matter?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the death of any child is a tragedy. It's a tragedy for the family, it's a tragedy for the community, and it's a tragedy for all of us. We need to learn everything we can from every incident, but we don't need to have a full review of every incident to learn from it because in many cases children die of natural causes. When that is determined by the medical examiner, when the evidence is already there, then the in-depth review that the hon. member is talking about is not necessary. We do not want to put people through very, very difficult circumstances when the evidence is already available to the public.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Land Titles Registry

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Service Alberta is on the fence when it comes to Alberta's land titles registry system, and it's time he got off it. The minister is clearly interested in privatizing Alberta's land titles registry. On November 7 he told this House that Alberta's land titles registry is the "gold standard" but that this government wanted to see if there was a better way of doing things. I'm sure that the minister realizes a move towards privatization would have major implications for property owners and users of the system. The minister needs to be clear with Albertans. Minister, is your government going to privatize Alberta's land titles system? Yes or no?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, speaking of clarity, that party over there needs to be clear about something. Are they in favour of innovation and more private-sector investment, rethinking the way government does business? Or no? Are they looking to advocate the traditional, typical approaches, that government brings forth multimillion-dollar proposals? Do they expect ministers not to dig deep and ask tough questions and see what the best way is to run programs? Or no? It's quite simple. They need to know what side of the political equation they sit on. Do they care for innovation? Do they care to look at new options? Or no?

Mr. Fox: What are you hiding, Minister? Answer the question.

Given this PC government collected more than \$80 million in land titles revenue and given that common sense dictates that if it ain't broke, don't fix it, can the minister explain what logic he's using to justify a potential change to Alberta's gold-standard land titles registry?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, the wonderful thing about this is that they finally admit that something we do is good. Wow. Amazing.

The fact is this. What we are looking to do is to assess what the next step in our land titles modernization looks like. For example, other governments in Canada have moved forward with online submissions of forms. Wow. Considering there are some apparent lawyers on the other side, maybe they would know that. Our question is: before spending \$30 million to mimic their system, is that the system that will work best for Albertans?

Mr. Fox: Selling off property rights to the highest bidder, Minister?

Given that this government claims to be open and transparent and given that this minister is clearly toying with the idea of privatizing a very successful land titles system, will the minister of

accountability at least stand up and do his job and make sure that any future contract is fully public so that Albertans will know what they're getting when this government sells off our property rights to the highest bidder? Minister, do your job.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, we have continuously maintained that there are four things that the government of Alberta will always maintain. Number one, we'll always own the title, always assure the title. Always. We will always be the owner of the data. We will always be the ones that uphold the assurance fund. We will control fees, and we will set service standards. Where, based on that, can that member stand up and spread this sort of fear? [interjections] This is the type of thing that, quite frankly, Albertans are getting sick of. [interjections]

The Speaker: Too many interjections, hon. members. Let's keep them out of the way, please.

Let's go on. Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

Alberta Distance Learning Centre

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency is home to the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. We are very proud of this institution and the staff who work there. Given that the Inspiring Education report, which is the basis of the new Education Act, highlighted the importance of innovative practices and the need to be flexible in the delivery of education – my question is to the Minister of Education – can you tell me what the Department of Education's thoughts are on the importance of distance education delivery by ADLC in relation to meeting the principles of the new Education Act?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. First of all, I'd like to thank her for her advocacy for education in Alberta as a former president of the Alberta School Boards Association and her great advocacy on behalf of her constituents in the ADLC. That's why we chose her to chair the Education Act Regulatory Review Committee, which is out working right now. She knows the Education Act very well, and she knows that one of the underpinnings and one of the pillars of the Education Act and what we're doing in Alberta is that choice. Foundational to that, going forward in the future, is going to be distance education, which the ADLC will be an important part of.

Ms Kubinec: To the same minister: given that ADLC is a critical, value-added service and provides students with a broad base of programming in order to equalize opportunities, especially to students in small and rural high schools, will the department work with ADLC to come up with a funding model that will maintain the excellent level of service that has been provided for 90 years?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, that's quite a proud history, and I'll go further than that. I wouldn't describe them as value-add. I would describe ADLC and distance learning in general as foundational to our future, and we need to ensure that students enrolled in distance education programs continue to receive the high quality of education. That's why we're in the process of reviewing the distance education model and strategy in Alberta right now. [interjections] That report is due sometime close to the end of the year or early in the coming year, and those recommendations are going to help inform where we go forward on a strategy with distance learning.

The Speaker: Please keep the interjections out of here. I'm having trouble hearing, and I'm sure other members are, too.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Ms Kubinec: The minister answered my last question. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Stony Plain.

Energy Company Licensee Liability Rating Program

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The licensee liability rating program is jeopardizing Alberta's energy sector by driving junior producers out of business. Recently I met with several stakeholders to hear their concerns. One gave this example. Somebody owns a house and rents it out. It becomes vacant. Then all of a sudden the government tells them to bulldoze it down. That's the effect of the LLR program on these junior producers. The program is forcing the abandonment of producing wells. Yesterday the minister said that he directed the Energy Regulator to explore all possible options to ease the pain this is causing. What can the minister report is being done to ensure producing wells aren't needlessly being abandoned?

Mr. Hughes: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is always a great deal of activity amongst smaller players in the oil and gas industry. We've all witnessed that, where people sell and buy, transactions throughout the system in buying and selling wells and properties and leases. The hon. member is asking a question. What we have done here is that I have asked the Alberta Energy Regulator to take every step possible to ensure that as we protect Albertans, we also ensure that every option is available to small producers, explorers in oil and gas, to ensure that these assets are properly looked after for all Albertans.

Mr. Hale: Mr. Speaker, given that the PC government botched the royalty review and caused energy revenues to plummet and given that the Alberta Energy Regulator has botched the implementation of the licensee liability rating program, will the minister commit today to stopping any further implementation of this program until he can find a way to do it without wiping out any more of our junior producers?

Mr. Hughes: Mr. Speaker, small producers in this province, many of them, are facing very difficult circumstances because they don't have adequate access to markets. It's because they don't have adequate access – you know, they've faced a very tough time for a very long time. What we're trying to ensure is that Albertans also are protected at the same time that industry is protected. Steps are being taken this very week, working with the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, to ensure that that work is done to explore all possible ways to ensure that these small producers have access to other tools.

2:40

Mr. Hale: Mr. Speaker, given that this minister says that he understands the challenges to junior producers and given that this government is plowing ahead despite that desire and the immediate threat to over 200 junior companies, companies that live in and support our communities, can the minister assure us that this isn't a cynical plan to force a consolidation of industry by eliminating junior producers?

Mr. Hughes: Well, Mr. Speaker, small producers in this province are the heart and soul and the very entrepreneurial spirit of the province. There is no way – there is no way – that any government

in this province on this side of this House would ever pursue that kind of a strategy. It's an outrageous allegation. We are here to protect the rights of Albertans, to protect the future of Albertans, and to ensure that we have a robust economy and a robust producing sector. We're going to work hard to make sure that happens. That's why we created an Energy Regulator that is effective and efficient, that looks after and protects the long-term interests of Albertans but ensures we have a very active economy at the same time.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the time for question period has now expired. I want to thank Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for letting her second sup go when the question had been answered. Good leadership. Good example on you. Kudos also to Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Gold Bar, Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-Shaw among others, who kept their preambles to an absolute minimum if not eliminated them totally. Thank you for that.

Mathematically, members, it's almost impossible to get past 15 questions. We made it to 14 today. If you take 35 seconds to the maximum for a question, which is allowed, and 35 seconds to the maximum for an answer, and you go down that mathematics, you'll see that it's almost impossible to get past 15. But with help from some of you, members, mathematically we can get up to 16, maybe even 17 like we did yesterday.

Let us continue on momentarily with Members' Statements. We'll give you 20 seconds of preparation, and then we'll start with Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood with your member's statement, please.

Child and Family Supports

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Due to the significant time and resources of the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald* Albertans are getting a devastatingly complete picture of the shortcomings of the province's foster care system. In the coming days, as more of these stories come out, I urge all Albertans to remember who is affected by this tragic failure: children who did not choose the circumstances they were dealt; parents who did not have the support they needed for child care, for income support, or to make their rent; families with holes in their family trees, where a cousin, a grandchild, a niece, or a nephew should have been. The vast majority of children in care are apprehended from families that are living below the poverty line, dealing with mental health problems, or struggling with addiction. Seventy per cent of them are aboriginal.

This Premier was elected in part on a promise to end child poverty; however, her first budget after being re-elected was a betrayal of the children and families she promised to help. Cuts were made to rent supplements, child care grants, and income support. The government continues to oversee the worst mental health and addictions support system in the country.

As the children's advocate pointed out earlier this month, there is no reason why children who have faced neglect and trauma should also encounter barriers when they need mental health supports. Most disturbing, though, is that the factors that put a child on the path to government care are so well known. This government has steadily refused to address the systemic causes of poverty despite making promises that they would.

Mr. Speaker, these children are our responsibility, all of us together. When one is lost, it is our collective failure. We simply have to stop letting these kids down. When we make them a promise, we need to keep it. We owe them that at least.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Legislative Offices

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I rise to speak today about an essential component of our parliamentary institution, which has been proven for over 800 years of good democratic governance, the officers of the Legislature. In Alberta officers of the Legislature currently include the Auditor General, the Child and Youth Advocate, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ethics Commissioner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ombudsman, and the Public Interest Commissioner.

These independent, nonpartisan officers are recruited by our Assembly's all-party select special committee in an open competition based on qualifications, not their political affiliation. Each legislative office is governed by the laws passed by this Assembly, and the task of the legislative officer is to administer and enforce the law like a judicial body. Each officer has an annual business plan and an annual report to the Assembly. They are audited by the Auditor General, and their expenses are posted online in order to ensure the highest level of transparency while maintaining legislative confidentiality.

In addition, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, which is an all-party committee of the Assembly consisting of 11 MLAs, can consider officers' requests, changes in legislation, and forward the recommendations to the appropriate minister. Our Legislature mandates that the laws that govern these offices are subject to review on a regular basis.

Alberta has always been at the forefront when it comes to creating legislative offices. In 1967 our province became the first jurisdiction in North America to establish an Ombudsman. While legislative offices are part of the Legislature, they are not government, are not partisan, and their issues are the subject of our standing committee.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Holodomor Memorial Day

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Holodomor, when we pause to remember the loss of so many lives and the injustices of a truly despicable regime. To a person of Ukrainian heritage remembering Holodomor strikes close to the heart as family members and Ukrainians across the world recall the horrors of the famine planned by the cold-hearted Communist regime under Joseph Stalin.

Ukrainians did not take to Communism as the Russian Communists desired. There was resistance to the centralization of power in the countryside, and the regime sought and implemented a means by which to impose its will and its flawed economic model. That means was to deny the peasants the agricultural products of their labour and to slowly starve them into compliance with the Soviet dictates.

Holodomor was entirely a man-made event, planned by the government of the USSR. In order to establish a Soviet empire as an industrial world power, Stalin would not tolerate the way of life in Ukraine, and for this, millions of innocent lives were tragically

lost. To punish Ukrainians for their resistance to collectivism, Stalin decided to starve them into submission. This cruel punishment furthered Stalin's ambitions but devastated the people of Ukraine. Hunger became a weapon to Stalin, and he used that weapon with impunity.

We must never forget the devastation that was wrought on Ukraine by the evils of Communism during the 1930s. While we remember the lives of those who were lost and those who needlessly suffered, we must stand together in opposition to this act of genocide. Never again shall we allow such a tragedy to occur. Today, as we mark Holodomor, it is a timely reminder of the inherent need for western society to stand together in defence of every person's rights, liberties, and freedoms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of notices to provide to the House today. First, I would like to give oral notice of intention to introduce Bill 45, the Public Sector Services Continuation Act, which will be sponsored by myself.

I would also like to give oral notice of intention to introduce Bill 46, the Public Service Salary Restraint Act, and Bill 42, the Securities Amendment Act, 2013, which are sponsored by the hon. Provincial Treasurer and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I also would want to provide oral notice of intention of introduce two motions. The first motion would be:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 77(2) Bill 45, Public Sector Services Continuation Act, may be advanced two or more stages in one day and that if Bill 45 has not yet been introduced, then immediately following the passage of this motion the Assembly shall revert to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of Bill 45, Public Sector Services Continuation Act.

The second motion that I'd like to give notice of is:

Be it resolved that

- A. On Thursday, November 28, 2013, the Assembly continue sitting beyond its normal adjournment hour of 4:30 p.m. for consideration of Bill 45, Public Sector Services Continuation Act, and any related motions; and
- B. Upon Government House Leader advising the Assembly no later than the time of adjournment on Thursday, November 28, 2013, the Assembly reconvene on Friday, November 29, 2013, at 10 a.m. for a special sitting, and the only business to be considered by the Assembly that day shall be Bill 45, Public Sector Services Continuation Act, and any related motions.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Services for Person with Disabilities. Do you have a tabling? Perhaps we'll come back to it.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article from the November-December edition of the *Fraser Forum* entitled Pensions and Government Both Hurting from Canada's Inability to Ship Oil to Market, written by Kenneth P. Green. In this article Mr. Green points out that the biggest obstacle to expansion of such projects as the Keystone pipeline is political. He mentions that all environmental, engineering, routing, and other challenges have largely been put to

rest. His position is that while rail transport is generally safe, it is not as safe as transport via pipeline.

I table this article and hope that everyone gets a chance to read it.

The Speaker: Back to the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my apologies. On a couple occasions in this House the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has referenced some statistics about lost-time claims for paramedics in Calgary. I did review the information that he tabled, and I am unable to source that information. I am unable to determine where he got it from or the validity of it. So I'm tabling today five copies of paramedical occupations claims reported by the Workers' Compensation Board both for the province of Alberta and for Calgary specifically, and very clearly they don't align with information that the hon. member has.

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

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of a summary report from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees called Stress and Well-Being among Local 006 Members, child care workers in the government outlining the significant stress associated with their work, associated with increased rates of mental illness and burnout, and highlighting some of the opportunities for assisting these important employees in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to table 100 more of the handwritten letters that my office has received expressing concerns about the deep cuts to postsecondary education that are happening in this province. These letters call on this PC government to reverse their harmful cuts to postsecondary education. A feeling of confusion, frustration, and anger is reflected in the over 1,000 letters my office has received from concerned staff and students so far at the University of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

If not, hon. members, let me take this opportunity pursuant to section 46(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act to table with the Assembly the requisite number of copies of the annual report of the office of the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta for the period from April 1, 2012, to March 31, 2013.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horner, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Government Accountability Act the 2013-14 first-quarter fiscal update and economic statement dated August 2013 and the 2013-14 second-quarter fiscal update and economic statement dated November 2013.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we had two points of order, one of which might stand already as withdrawn, so let me just check quickly if I could here. It was with respect to an issue that arose

when the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned the words “wild alliance,” and then he withdrew them at my request.

Does that point of order fall away, then, in your mind, hon. opposition deputy House leader?

Mr. Saskiw: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Although there have been numerous times when he’s said it, so hopefully it becomes a little clearer for him. He’s slow to learning it.

The Speaker: Thank you. He did withdraw them.

Let’s move on to the second point of order, which was raised at 2:24 p.m. I believe it was also Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, again with respect to some comments presumably made by the President of Treasury Board. So your citation, and please proceed with your point of order.

Point of Order Clarification

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise according to Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). This was in a response to a question from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in which the Finance minister stated that the opposition was promoting fear. That’s a very serious allegation. In the totality of his three answers that he provided, in addition to stating that the opposition was promoting fear, he also said that there was no evidence or basis for the opposition’s perspective.

I realize that the use of the term “opposition” isn’t referring to a specific member per se, but of course you’d have to look at the totality of the way he was answering that question, the results of which would inspire the House to get into disorder. Of course, you have to take it in context. In the previous question, of course, he misnamed our party again. He was clear and was deliberately trying to cause disorder in this Assembly.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the main perspective on this is that we saw the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar give what is called a softball question, you know, just a lob. In fact, it was more along the lines of being close up and just tossing a question to the Finance minister. He was so close that it was almost like a T-ball for the Finance minister. It was, quite frankly, embarrassing. I’d ask that – and perhaps this is more of a clarification as he never did talk about a specific member of the opposition – it be withdrawn. Hopefully, we don’t have those T-ball questions.

The Speaker: I think we’ll deal with this in quick order, but I’ll allow the Deputy Government House Leader to comment.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would agree with the last statement that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills made, that perhaps this is more of a point of clarification because the President of the Treasury Board did not mention any particular member, did not impugn the motives of any particular member. Above all else, I think you can also look to the intent and the context. I would respectfully submit to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills that there has been no evidence conferred as to the intent or that any of his intent was off the actual rules.

The last thing I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that, again, whether or not something is a softball or a hardball question is up to the beholder to decide. That’s not part of this point of order.

The Speaker: Well, thank you, hon. members. I’ve heard enough on this. I’ve reviewed the Blues as well, and let me just for purposes of the record state the following. At approximately 2:23

this afternoon the Minister of Finance stood and said the following:

You know, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note because one of the things that is difficult is when folks in the opposition or other stakeholders decide to try to scare Albertans or to promote fear to try to change their minds.

Mr. Speaker, it’s important to note that the changes that we’re proposing will only apply to benefits earned after 2015, so benefits that members have already earned and earn up to the end of 2015 are not affected.

And he went on.

In any event, we shouldn’t be trying to use this time and a point of order to prolong any debate, but I do appreciate the clarifications.

By the same token, let’s be careful of our language. This was not particularly strong language, in my view, but it’s more the tone and the timbre with which sometimes our words get delivered that should be paid attention to.

That having been said, that concludes this matter, and we’re going to move on.

3:00

Orders of the Day

Committee of Supply

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

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

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2013-14 General Revenue Fund

The Chair: Before we commence the consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to briefly review the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As you know, the Assembly approved amendments to the standing orders that impact supplementary supply consideration. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister’s behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister’s behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister’s behalf, may speak,
- (d) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the fourth party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister’s behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister’s behalf, may speak, and
- (f) any Member may speak thereafter.

During the above rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the above rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 44, approved by the Assembly on November 25, 2013, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would like to move the 2013-2014 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund.

The estimates will provide additional spending authority to eight government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize an increase of \$624.7 million in voted operational funding and \$139.6 million in voted capital funding for the government. These estimates are consistent with the amended 2013-2014 fiscal plan, presented as an appendix to these estimates.

The estimates will authorize increases for the departments of Aboriginal Relations, Agriculture and Rural Development, Education, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Human Services, Infrastructure, Municipal Affairs, and Transportation. The ministers that are responsible for these departments will be pleased to answer any questions from the members of the House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, if the House leaders would send me a list of your speakers, because of the specific rotation it might be helpful for me.

I recognize the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to rise and speak to this supplementary supply bill that we received yesterday. I first want to comment that, again, I do not feel it is appropriate for the government to put a document of this size and dealing with this kind of money in front of us less than roughly 12 hours before we're actually supposed to address it in this House. That's not an appropriate amount of time to give the Official Opposition and the members of the Liberal and ND caucuses an opportunity to go through line by line, figure things out, cross-check, ask the ministry questions in advance, and be adequately prepared to make sure that we have what we need in this supplementary supply bill. There's been no opportunity for consultation.

We know what the supplementary supply is essentially about; it's about flood funding. Obviously, everyone in this House is in favour of making sure that we have the money that we need for reconstruction and relief efforts and so forth for the floods of this past summer, but in order to do a proper job of that – clearly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the government and so forth have done research and have looked into this, and I'm sure they're very confident in what they're proposing in this document.

But without an opportunity to even brief us – I've not been briefed as the Finance critic for the Official Opposition. I've not had an opportunity to go over it with the Finance minister. Our critics have not had the opportunity to go over it; for example, the Municipal Affairs critic has not had an opportunity to be briefed by the Municipal Affairs minister on this issue, to go over it and to understand in full detail. And that's not just the Municipal Affairs minister. That applies to also the ministries of Aboriginal Relations, Agriculture and Rural Development, Education, Environment and SRD, Human Services, Infrastructure, Municipal Affairs, as I've said, and Transportation.

We're talking about \$624 million in operational funding here, more than half a billion dollars, and, in addition, roughly \$140 million in capital. That's a lot of money. That's a ton of money. We're not saying that it's not necessary money; it likely is. But how can we as an opposition and how can Albertans in general do the job of making sure that this is the right amount of money? Perhaps we need more; perhaps we need less. Who knows?

As the opposition we have had no opportunity to review this properly. This was put on our desks late last night. We come here. Obviously, we have to get ready for the day and question period and so forth. We had our entire research staff working on this as hard as they could. They, you know, helped us prepare as best we

could with the half an hour to 45 minutes that we got. We've had no help from the ministries. Once again, it's a tired, tired pattern, and I fear from the government motions that we just heard prior to going into committee here the possibility of sitting all weekend on some things.

Mr. Chair, this is not good government. It's not good government. Proper process leads to good government. When you undermine the process by dumping things on the public, you end up with things like Bill 28 and the effect that that has had on the trust of this government with regard to our municipalities. Even if 95 per cent of what's in there was okay, it's the fact that there was no consultation and there was no chance for feedback that has caused the problem. Now, there was backtracking on that, and, hopefully, we're going to get a better bill next week and so forth.

Mr. Griffiths: Relevance?

3:10

Mr. Anderson: Again, as it was with Bill 28 – and I see that the Municipal Affairs minister is asking about relevance. Of course, he is a little bit tender on this topic of Bill 28, but that's okay. We understand his tenderness.

The supplementary supply estimates, Mr. Chair, have been dumped on us, much like Bill 28 was dumped on us, and we have very little time to go over them and, frankly, to ask the ministry some questions on these things. So our critics are going to do the best that they can. We hope that the ministers opposite will answer the questions, which would be a nice thing for them to do in this case. This could have been done previously in a briefing session, but I'm sure it's going to take longer than it otherwise would. Granted, they've given us a whole three hours to debate more than \$700 million in financing. A whole three hours. That's good government. They've given us a whole three hours to kind of understand fully what's in this bill.

Honestly, guys. Please. I mean, you're the majority in your caucus. Can you please help your leadership understand that good government comes out of good processes and good legislative processes and co-operation and doing things previous to dumping it in the Legislature, doing the proper consultation with opposition and stakeholder groups, not just plumping it on the ground here, especially when you're dealing with this much money?

Now, obviously, the MLAs in this caucus represent areas that were probably, frankly, the most affected areas of the flood. There obviously are some on the government side who are MLAs of areas that were flooded extensively as well, including the Premier, the Member for Calgary-Bow, and others. Obviously, the worst flooding certainly happened in the Highwood area and also on the First Nations reservations and places like Strathmore-Brooks. Obviously, Banff-Cochrane was another area very hard hit.

We are very in tune and very aware of the need for flood funding. We think, and we've said this many times, that the initial government response to the flooding was good. It was solid. We had very few deaths. We had, obviously, pain and suffering, and those things are unavoidable in a tragedy of this magnitude, but I think all efforts were undertaken to alleviate that pain and suffering as much as possible. That was good.

There were some hiccups as well. No doubt about that. The first few days of treatment of the local MLAs, particularly the MLA for Highwood and her constituency, in my view, was inexcusable. She has to, as any MLA here does, inform her constituents of the relief programs and the most up-to-date information because she's right on the ground, living in the community, she knows the contacts, and so forth. There seemed to be a pretty active effort to freeze her out in the beginning. That seemed to take care of itself

as it went forward, and perhaps some credit is due to the Member for Calgary-South East for smoothing that over and bringing her into the briefing circle and so forth. That has been good.

It's been very disappointing to see the Premier continually take offence to the Member for Highwood advocating for her constituency on the flood as she constantly does. I think that shows smallness on her part in that regard. I would say that on the whole the government has done a reasonable job in the first response, the initial relief effort for the flood.

Now, that's the area where they've done well. Where they had a failing grade was preparedness. Their flood mitigation infrastructure was not in place. They can say what they want about implementing X amount of the 2005 flood mitigation report from Member Groeneveld at the time, but the fact of the matter is that instead of spending \$350-odd million on flood mitigation efforts, they decided to spend \$350 million on new MLA offices. That lack of prioritization – the money was clearly there. I look at it out of my window every day, what \$350 million could buy. Now, would that mitigation have stopped all of the flooding? No, it sure wouldn't have, but it would have gone a long way.

I look forward to continued debate on this.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Your time has expired.

I'll recognize the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the 2013-2014 supplementary supply, which, of course, deals with eight different ministries within government. I'd like to echo the comments from the Member for Airdrie. We just got notice of this. We're dealing with millions and millions of dollars, yet the government doesn't feel like it's necessary to have a fulsome debate on it. You're essentially giving very little notice and only three hours to debate a significant amount of expenditures. Of course, the vast majority of these funds that are going to be expended is for the flood effort, and I'm sure all members of this Assembly agree with that. At the same time, we have to be frugal and vigilant with taxpayer money, and the requirement there is that we have sufficient notice, that we're sufficiently briefed, and that we work co-operatively together to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are respected.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's potentially a symptom of a government that's been in power for over 42 years, where they don't feel that the opposition should have a role in ensuring that taxpayers' dollars are respected. It's consistent with what I would call the draconian measures that were put forward by the Government House Leader this afternoon in his motions, which I'm sure will have a significant effect on the flow of legislation later throughout this session.

Of course, we know that a significant amount of dollars that are expended in the flood relief is going to be reimbursed through the federal program, and we look forward to seeing how much of those monies is in fact reimbursed.

I would just like to highlight a few things. Of course, as was mentioned by the Member for Airdrie, on the mitigation front there was a report done by a former minister, Mr. Groeneveld, and what this government did is what they do in many cases. They kept the report secret. They wouldn't release it, nor did they act on it. They essentially had the report on their desk and let it collect dust. Mr. Speaker, they essentially, you know, threw the report in the garbage. If you're not going to act on the measures in a report, then what's the point of doing the report in the first place? What was the rationale for the secrecy, for not releasing the report? Of course, it was subsequently released, and the fact is that they never

implemented many of the significant material recommendations that were put forward by Mr. Groeneveld.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, there are eight different ministries. There's a significant amount of funds being expended, but with such short notice and absolutely zero briefing to members of the opposition it's difficult to discuss measures of such magnitude when the government feels that there's no need to discuss them. The evidence that they feel there's no need to discuss them is the fact that they've given minimal notice and a minimal amount of time to discuss the supplementary supply estimates.

Of course, everyone here would agree that any funds that are necessary for the flood relief should in fact be expended, and my understanding just in the short amount of time that we've had to review these documents is that a substantial amount of the money that's being requested here is in fact related to disaster programs in each of these departments. You look at Aboriginal Relations, Agriculture, Education, Transportation, Infrastructure projects. Of course, I support measures that go towards that.

3:20

I would also mention that this is why it's important that during the good times you actually save money. You put money in a sustainability fund so that if a rainy day does happen, you have those funds available for you because you just never know what's going to happen. But instead of being wise with taxpayer dollars, we see spending on things like \$350 million for brand new MLA offices. Perhaps that money could go towards mitigation projects. You see millions of dollars going towards severances to individuals with close ties to a particular party. Perhaps those dollars could in fact go towards things like mitigation projects.

On this particular supplementary supply we'll be voting in favour despite very little time, very little notice by the government in terms of putting this forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I recognize the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, rise and appreciate the chance to talk for a few minutes on the 2013-2014 supplementary supply estimates. I'm very, very pleased to see some quick action by the government. Again, I want to come back and talk about my displeasure with the process, how we get one day to look at this.

As many people in this House know, the 2010 flood that hit my constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat – I've talked about how it was estimated to be a 1-in-350-year occurrence, how many constituents who went to bed that night with water nowhere near them had to swim for it. Although it's been reported that a large part of the process to finish up claims from this flood almost four years later is a function of people not getting their paperwork in and a function of waiting for estimates and whatnot, part of the truth is that people have walked away from the process because of the length of time it's taken. People have walked away from the process because of the uncertainty of how and when they're going to be paid out.

So something happened that will help many, many of the people of southern Alberta that were affected by this most recent disaster, which can get some money to people that need it and get money into the hands of people that were affected greatly by this flood and unable to have recourse through their insurance companies. As a matter of fact, the operator of the Medicine Hat food bank called me the other day, about two weeks ago, almost four months after the flood, and said: please do what you can to hurry up the response and the help to this flood; we're still servicing too many people from the flood at the food bank because of situations like

they're paying for their existing property, that was flooded, and, of course, have to pay to maintain a second residence.

I remember a flood way back in 1995. There was a situation where people actually bought the house next door to them because their family was growing. They put it on the market, couldn't sell it, and decided to rent it out to make sure they could cover both of their payments. Good Albertans wanting to pay their own way. When the flood hit, believe it or not, the one they lived in didn't get hit; the one they rented out did. Because it was a revenue property, it didn't qualify under the disaster relief programs. It was not rentable or habitable anymore, so it created a huge financial hardship. I'm hearing instances of this again. A 40-year-old government with 20, 25 years between floods: it's amazing how these things get left on the table and don't get handled.

The process, to get this yesterday and not have time to analyze it, to ask questions, to reach out to our stakeholders: again, that's flawed. Somebody told me that the Canadian Senate costs about what the Alberta Legislature costs. I certainly hope we all strive to be as effective and as efficient as we can. I would hope that getting information earlier, sooner, and in more quality and quantity would be a good thing.

We saw today that the government is not against working with the opposition when it turns out to be to their advantage. Amazingly, with these underreported deaths in government care for all these years, all of a sudden they want to reach out to us and work with us. That is a good thing. That is a very good thing. Please do it more often.

Again, part of the reason that I'm in support of this and appreciative of the chance to talk about it is that it is going to speed up the disaster relief to Cypress-Medicine Hat and to all of southern Alberta. Fort McMurray was also involved in this, so let's not forget that there were a lot of people and not-for-profit organizations up there that were affected that are probably involved in this.

I would like to ask a couple of questions, though, when the government has their chance to stand up if they wish. I see that 33 and a half million dollars is for Transportation to improve roads and bridges. That's important. It's important in our commodity-based province to get going as fast as we can. We recall the Auditor General's report from a year ago, that many bridge inspections had been neglected to be done. Obviously, the fast-flowing water may have compromised some, so I trust that the Transportation minister will ensure the safety of our roads and our people.

One of the questions I have, though, is that I see that in the last budget for water management infrastructure, Transportation cut \$11 million and is now adding \$6 million. I'd be curious to know if this \$6 million is in direct response to the flood damage. I understand that the numbers that we can recoup from the federal government are somewhere between 65 and 90 per cent. I'd be curious: how much of this could we recapture from the federal government?

I'm also wondering, of course, if that money had been spent, could it have mitigated some of this? The flood mitigation is still an amazing thing to me. I had a question in here a month or so ago about the former MLA who prepared the report and actually stated: someday we may get caught for not doing this work; someday it may come back to haunt us, that this wasn't done, and what will we say then? Well, here we are looking at \$761 million. Part of that member's answer is that \$751 million may not have had to be spent. If I remember the number right, the flood mitigation number was some side of \$330 million, so you guys are twice penny-wise and pound foolish. Way to go, guys. You know, that's interesting to see.

I see that the Infrastructure minister is asking for a hundred million to buy flooded-out homes. Again, necessary and important for people. This huge disaster was beyond their control. Let's get at it as soon as we can. Let's treat them fair, and let's treat the taxpayers fair on this as well. I'm wondering, though, why this hundred million is being touted as operational and not as capital. Is there a plan to resell the lots? Is there a plan to turn the lots over to the municipalities for parks? How far along are we on that? Again, it seems slightly odd to me, and I'd hope for some clarification that that hundred million is being considered as operational and not capital.

Also, the Infrastructure department is asking for \$5 million for planning a community resources centre for High River. As I read this, it's for planning only. Is this \$5 million going to be on the three-year capital plan and then maybe disappear again in a year without ever being done? You know, soft costs in the construction industry generally relate to about 7 or 8 per cent of the total project. So if planning is \$5 million and engineering is \$5 million – I can obviously only guess – are we thinking of spending \$120 million in High River for a community resources centre? Maybe it's money well spent. Maybe it's good value. I would like to hear and I'm sure everybody in this House would like to hear a little bit about what the government's intentions are.

Again, I'm looking at the process. I'm looking at a situation where we get a day's notice with this in the middle of our MLAs, our LAs, and our communications and research staff working very, very thoroughly, very, very hard, and very, very capably to get the information on these laws and bills, that are already on our desks in front of us, that we need to spend some proper time on.

3:30

You know, three days, 72 hours. As the Member for Airdrie said, a chance to consult between ministers and critics could have gone a long way to make the process of spending Albertans' tax money – and there is only one taxpayer, whether the federal government recuses 65 or 90 per cent of this for us. The process of being more careful in how we spend Alberta taxpayers' money I think is a good step and a step that I'd like to see more and more often. I'd like to see it done all of the time.

Disaster relief, if part of this 600 and some-odd million dollars in operational can go as soon as possible and as fairly as possible to people that were affected through no fault of their own in this great disaster . . .

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today to speak to the 2013-14 supplementary supply estimates general revenue fund motions that are here before us. I find it, like my colleagues, kind of interesting that we got this a day ago, maybe even a day ago. I think I remember seeing e-mails at midnight last night from research staff looking for copies of this thing because it still wasn't available on the website at that point.

But, you know, I digress. I guess that's what this government thinks of Albertans and the democratic process. We just roll right over it and keep going and do what you want to do without giving time for oversight. That is really what the Official Opposition is here to do. We are here to be the oversight of the government, to point out errors, to be able to go through this and make sure that Albertans are getting the very best value for their dollar out of this government. But when you've only got an hour or two to prep for this because that's all that the government is willing to give you, it

really speaks a lot to how you feel about Albertans and how you feel about them knowing what you're putting forth in these documents.

Looking at it here, there's \$624,737,000 of operational spending in this presentation from the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. On top of that there's another \$139,560,000 of capital spending. All told, that's \$764,297,000 in spending from this government. And how much time is this government giving to debate and to do oversight for Albertans? Three hours. Three hours. Can you believe that? I can't believe that. Three hours. Over half a billion dollars is going to be spent . . .

An Hon. Member: Three-quarters of a billion.

Mr. Fox: Three-quarters, that's right. Three-quarters of a billion dollars is going to be spent or has already been spent, and you're giving Albertans through their elected representatives three hours to look over these documents, to bring it forth in a public venue such as this to talk about what this government is doing.

You know, there's probably a lot of good things in here that the government is spending money on. I mean, there is the rebuilding of the province after the disastrous June floods. It's something that the government has got to do, but Albertans deserve to know how you're doing it and how you're spending those funds. You need to give them the ability to do the due diligence, to figure out what it is that you guys are doing. Unless you've got something to hide, but you wouldn't have anything to hide, would you? I mean, I asked the Minister of Service Alberta today about privatizing land titles, but no answer on that. I don't know if he's hiding something or not.

I guess we'll have to come back and ask him again, just like we're going to have to ask you a few more questions about this 2013-14 supplementary supply estimates booklet that you've given us here to look over. You've given Albertans less than, well, 24 hours to look at it before you're voting on it. Less than 24 hours for three-quarters of a billion dollars. Is that really respect to the Alberta taxpayer? I don't think so. I don't think that's respect to my constituents, to only give them 24 hours before a motion to have a look at what this government is spending three-quarters of a billion dollars on.

You know, looking at this, there are more than 40 pages of spending figures. Forty pages of spending figures, less than 24 hours. How many Albertans woke up this morning even knowing that this was sitting on our desks, that we were going to be debating this today? Aside from maybe friends at stakeholder groups like the CFIB or the CTF or our fellow colleagues here in the Legislature, other MLAs, really, I don't think Albertans even saw this, even knew this was coming out last night. I mean, there was a quick motion last night. We adjourned. We came back here to do question period, and here we are, well, not even barely two hours later, and we're discussing three-quarters of a billion dollars in spending.

Now, when we look through this, what is this being spent on? Let's see. Aboriginal Relations here, the amount is \$50 million which is requested "to relocate, renovate or rebuild flood-affected homes in First Nations communities." Well, that is something that we must do, so, yeah, I'm in agreement with that one. Communities that were affected by the flood were Siksika Nation, Morley, and also Tsuu T'ina. So we see that the government is actually doing good work on this. They're actually spending the money here where it needs to be spent. Good for you, guys. We'll clap for you on that one.

Let's see. Agriculture and Rural Development. They are receiving an extra \$19.115 million in operational spending. This is

for business relief. It's interesting that in this flood you guys are actually going to put money out there, but in the last flood that affected central Alberta I actually had farmers contact me because they never got any rebuilding money when their crops were lying in the field rotting. I'm glad to see that at least this time the government has learned its lesson and is actually going to cover some of these costs.

In Education there's an additional \$9 million in spending, and the money is going to be going to support school boards in High River, Canmore, and Exshaw. These boards have seen a sudden decline in enrolment, and they need to be topped up, so I'm happy to see that those funds are going there. What is interesting, though, is that there are really no capital amounts included here in the supplementary supply estimates for Education, so I'm wondering how much money is actually going to be spent and how it's going to be spent to rebuild some of the schools that are in that area. I mean, not only were homes and businesses affected, but, as we know, government infrastructure was affected as well.

I mean, schools are some of the most important government infrastructure in this province because that's where we're educating a future generation to take over and lead us into the brave new world which is the future. It would be interesting to see what is going to be spent on the capital amount there. We'd heard rumours – actually, it wasn't a rumour; it was in the papers – about a temporary gymnasium in the Premier's riding. I'm wondering where in the supplementary estimates that one fell. Maybe it was just funds being shifted around in the ministry. I don't know. We haven't had a chance to ask the minister that one, and I'm not sure we're going to get the opportunity to ask the minister that one in these budget estimates. Maybe he'll be kind enough to stand up at some point here this afternoon in the just over two hours we have left on this. Maybe he'll stand up and answer that question, where the capital spending is on the flood relief, because it's not in the supplementary supply estimates for 2013-14.

Moving on here, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. We know that there is going to be some extra money being voted in here as well. I mean, it is in this booklet that was handed out less than 24 hours ago. There's some mention in the 2013-14 supplementary estimates on environment and sustainable resources. What's being voted on here? An extra \$2 million in operations and an extra \$101 million in capital. Jeez. That's over a third of what was asked for in the 2006 flood mitigation report. I wonder if it would have been wise to spend at least a third back then to figure out how we could mitigate some of these damages or how to deal with overland flooding. There were some recommendations there. It was – what? – \$300 million that was reported in that report that would be needed to upgrade the province here.

3:40

You know, there were some interesting things in there like updating flood maps yearly. How much was that amount? I think, if I remember correctly, it was a \$50,000 amount per year, one full-time employee through the ministry of environment. Fifty-thousand dollars doesn't seem like a lot of money to have spent six years ago on figuring out where the rivers are actually flowing now. It's not like – we'd heard one member say that the maps were correct, but the rivers were wrong. That was kind of an interesting statement considering that the river is what changes over and over and over again. I mean, over history how many times have paths of the rivers changed? Maybe we should be updating those maps yearly.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you for that, Mr. Chair. I want to foray into this discussion here. It's quite significant that the amount of money that's being brought before us here in a short period of time does not allow for proper discussion. The reason for this facility, for this Chamber, is open discussion, and with the appropriation of approximately three-quarters of a billion dollars of funding that's coming forward, it certainly deserves significant time and discussion and back and forth on that. That's my reason for getting involved in this discussion going forward.

As the critic for Tourism, Parks and Rec I see on one page, page 3, that there's some allocation for an increase in budget there, but on other pages there doesn't seem to be. It's not singularly carried out as a line item. I, too, would like to ask some questions on that.

I also see that there's some changing of funding to Alberta Agriculture, and I have interest there because there is a mention of a special project in my constituency. I know that the minister has made some inquiries in that regard in my constituency, so I'd like to understand how these budgets will be brought forward in those types of situations.

It's a responsibility that we have in this Chamber, and it's a significant, honourable duty that we have to bring forward these discussions with the ultimate sincerity. I have a situation in my constituency where there has been some improprieties with taxpayers' dollars, and as of today I'm just editing a letter to put out to my constituents in that regard about the misappropriation of taxpayers' dollars that's occurred in that county in my constituency.

There's a lot of importance to the funds that are brought forward here, and I would like to have a chance to debate them at a greater length at another time. It's part of the significance of the responsibilities that we have in this Chamber. Even the Speaker earlier on had made mention that 2015 will be the 800-year anniversary of the Magna Carta, the ability for members to bring forward a democratic discussion. I believe that proper allocation of taxpayers' funding and money towards any sort of new debate, new development that's required does not need to be done in a frivolous manner and is not to be taken lightly.

With that, Mr. Chair, I yield my position to another member.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm fairly disappointed on the methodology that's been employed by this government to basically railroad this bill through. There are so many variations of the issues that have to be addressed, that need to be discussed on how we're going to handle flood mitigation, on how we're going to spend money and even track the money that's been spent. It defies the logic of this House. I mean, we've gone through a number of issues where this government has talked about transparency and accountability, and what we have here is very little opportunity to actually look at this spending bill and to really, you know, drill down into how this is being applied and how this is being managed so that we have some sort of consistency with the various factions of what's happening.

Let me explain. In 2005 the town of Sundre experienced a 200-year flood. In 2013 the province experiences a 100-year flood. Now, this is a bit of an oxymoron because you can't have a 200-year flood and a 100-year flood just years apart and continue

down this road, calling the next storm the 100-year flood. We should at least have 100 years between them, I mean, statistically.

But what we're doing here in many ways is risking wasting of a lot of money by not doing what we're supposed to do, by not doing what we should be doing. I'll give you an example. In the community of Sundre not just 100 but hundreds of citizens gathered together and protested to have this government do something about the river, do something about flood mitigation. We know that \$2.4 million was spent on things like berms and spurs to help the community of Sundre except we have one problem that has happened moving forward, which is that we've had another 100-year flood, and the river has moved over a mile. We have a government that says: we do not have to define what is a flood plain, we do not define what is a floodway or a flood fringe, but we're going to make maps to show these things. That makes no sense to me. To claim that we're going to use scientific data from some other source makes absolutely no sense because you should put in legislation what definition you're going to use. If you're going to use the Environment and Sustainable Resource definition, then make it so. Say that that's what it's going to be.

That's not what this government has done. It has made it so that it is – I think I'm going to quote an hon. member – off in the wind. That just doesn't make sense. I look at the damage that was done in the community of Sundre back during the 2000 flood. We lost the whole development of Coyote Creek. It was under water. The Coal Camp Road and the Bergen Road homes were damaged. The River Road homes were damaged. The Mountain Aire Lodge was damaged. The amount of damage went into the multimillions of dollars.

We move forward to this flood and this supplemental budget. The Garrington Bridge was destroyed and impassable. The Coyote Creek development again goes back under water. The riverbanks immediately adjacent to the river in Sundre were damaged and destroyed. River Road homes were destroyed. The Mountain Aire Lodge was destroyed, and Coal Camp Road was again destroyed.

Here we have a situation where we move from the 2005 flood to the 2013 flood, and what we have is no change whatsoever in the preparation or the flood mitigation, preparing for and mitigating a natural disaster. Now, what we know is that in 2013 2,000 cubic metres per second was recorded in the Red Deer River. That is incredibly high given the history of the river. We also know the river rose 12 metres.

Now, the community of Sundre would say that they were spared a bullet, that they got lucky because the amount of damage that the community of . . . [An electronic device sounded] Did you signal me, Mr. Chair?

3:50

The Chair: It sounded like somebody's phone was vibrating on a desk, hon. member. But carry on. I don't want to waste any of your time. Please.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There is lots of side noise in here, but I'm going to speak through it anyway. That doesn't matter.

An Hon. Member: It's in your head.

Mr. Anglin: Well, I mean, let's face it. If there's no common sense across the room, I might as well speak to the no common sense. I'm going to try to drive some sense into them. That's the whole point.

I mean, how do you make maps when you don't define what you're drawing on a map? How do you spend money based on

those maps and spend it efficiently if you don't have any definition as to what you're doing?

I have a community that suffered tremendously in 2005. Move forward; they suffered tremendously in 2012. We've forgotten that. This is a community that has suffered time and time again. They actually suffered a tremendous amount of damage in 2013, and I can't find one person that qualified for or received aid from this government. They've been denied time and time and time again. That's unfortunate.

We have spent money there in the past, but if we don't do it right, we're about to wash all that down the river in next spring's flood. That doesn't make sense to waste that kind of money. We need to be more efficient, we need to be more frugal, and we need to get the best value for the money that we spend. So to do a little bit of flood mitigation within and around that small community of Sundre but to not address the larger problem of the river and the floodway on that river, which is further upriver, we risk wasting all that money we spent just a couple of years ago.

There's nothing here in this budget that shows that we're going to do anything, but what we do know is this. We're going to do yet one more study. I have to tell you that the number of studies that have been done on the Red Deer River for flood mitigation is almost enough to make a dam. We don't need another study. We need to act on an engineering plan, and that's not here. We don't want to be throwing money away. We want to be spending it wisely, and that's not what we're seeing here.

It's very frustrating for me trying to get an answer from the minister of environment on this issue. It's extremely frustrating because we've met with her. This is a minister who has basically pooh-pooed the idea of pollution in the Athabasca River when it's probably the worst disaster known in Canada, in the history of Canada, of pollution going down the river, the heavy metals and toxins. It's a minister who said that gravel renews itself, and we know that's not true. That doesn't happen. I suppose if the next glacier comes through, we'll get some renewable gravel, but we'll have to wait a little while for that. With these kinds of comments coming out of the ministry, how can we expect from this minister that she will address this issue correctly and pragmatically and intelligently? We don't have that confidence.

What we don't have is the ability to really delve in and drill down into this bill to look at being more efficient in how we want to deal with this matter. What we have as a direct result is an entire community at risk, and that is tragic because if we don't spend what little we need to spend now in flood mitigation in the proper areas and take the proper action, we're going to have hundreds of millions of dollars in damage. More at risk are lives. As we've heard in the last couple of days when talking about children that were in the care of this government, in many ways the . . .

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I defer my time to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to give him an extra 10 minutes?

The Chair: You've got a total of 10 minutes. You've got till 4:05 p.m. between you.

Mr. McAllister: I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that I won't need the entire 10 minutes.

Let's try something a little different. I recognize that a lot of people watch these proceedings and wonder what we're on and on and on about, so this is what we ought to be discussing. We're

looking at ways to get \$625 million into the hands that need it for flood recovery. There is no member in here that wouldn't recognize that what we've gone through is going to require immediate action and that the sooner we can help out individuals, the better. There are communities that need to rebuild.

I cannot see us needing to oppose it, but we do have to in our role as Official Opposition find out why and where this money is going and what it is going to be doing. The point of the exercise, I guess, is to make sure, you know, that we're justifying value for the taxpayers. Our responsibility going forward is to the taxpayer so that these communities can rebuild. Again, just to point out, Mr. Chair, that \$625 million is a great amount of money, so it shouldn't be just rubber-stamped.

I was going to get to my question right now, but I'm going to delay it for about 30 seconds because I think it's the appropriate thing to do here so that we can prepare for a response. I will say wholeheartedly, Mr. Chair, as I look at the Education portion of the supplementary estimate, that we have \$9,050,000 going to boards that need it. I'm not exactly sure where, but I'll be the last person to stand here and say that they're not going to need it given what they're going through in Education right now. I cannot see any reason why I would not support it wholeheartedly. But as the Minister of Municipal Affairs said at the very beginning of this, the point of this debate is to have the ministers in this House so that we might ask them the appropriate questions, and then they could give us the answers, and those people watching at home can understand where their tax dollars are going.

Maybe I'm giving the Education minister a puffball question for once, Mr. Chair, but I think it's appropriate. I would like to ask the Minister of Education if he wants to respond – I hope that he does – to where the \$9,050,000 is going and if he could itemize it for us. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs said off the top, you know, the ministers would be here to answer these questions. My question to him would be: could he itemize the list of where this money is going and again just reaffirm as to why it's needed? I think it's important that we do that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to this totally unexpected situation we have today with a lot of great angst. It is difficult to understand how we as a government process can proceed with a situation here where we're actually talking about \$764 million, according to page 8 in this estimates booklet, with only just a few hours to have a moment or two to even page through what is contained in these pages here regarding all of these departments that are involved.

As many would know, I've spent some time in government work, whether it's been municipal council work and planning work and so on, and never have I ever in my lifetime expected that the government did these things in this manner, where they would dump this kind of information on someone late at night the night before and expect it to be able to be debated the next day with such an enormous amount of detail that is normally required for something like this. It seems absolutely appalling.

Nonetheless, we're here, and I can say only that I have paged through some of it. I know what it's all about. It's about the need for monies to help Alberta get back on its feet with regard to what has happened and what, as has been said by the media, is one of the largest disasters we've ever seen in Canada. I have no specific problem with trying to get this recovery program on its feet and going. It makes simple sense to do that. There are hundreds and

hundreds, thousands, of people in my riding alone that were greatly affected.

I spent a lot of time going through some of this information beforehand. I'm surprised that we can't spend a little more time.

Mr. Chairman, I realize my time is drawing to a close.

The Chair: You're still good, hon. member. There are four minutes left for your entire time however you choose to use it.

4:00

Mr. Stier: Okay. Thank you, then.

I'd just like to say that if we're going to be spending this kind of money, let's for sure hope that they're going to take some of the information that we think is appropriate, obtain that information properly, fly the rivers and stream beds and the towns and the city that is involved, get the elevations, get the surveys done, do the lidar mapping, get the right data, and then, for God's sake, take that information and put it together in an appropriately engineered plan and look at the mitigation solutions, cumulatively or not, that we can look at to try to get these things addressed.

Most importantly, let the people know what their disaster recovery program really entails. Give them more time to look at what the future could bring. Give them more time to understand how the caveat system works. Ensure that they have the caveat information in front of them. For those that may be getting bought out, look at those bits of information and ensure that everyone knows fully what could be imposed and what the implications could be. I think that only makes simple sense.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to relinquish the remaining few minutes I might have here. I would like to say that it is extremely appalling to me that we're having to hurry through something that's so important. I only hope from this, despite the process, that we can come out of this with a good plan and that it can move forward in a meaningful way.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for approximately two and a half minutes.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we all realize that this is a one in a hundred year, hopefully a one in a hundred and fifty year incident, and the cost to all Albertans is significant, so we need to be a little careful about how we're doing this and make sure that the tax dollars are being spent. Three-quarters of a billion dollars in this supplementary supply doesn't seem like a whole lot of money when we look at the total of what this event is going to end up costing us. We fully understand the need for this money, but we still need to be extremely careful that we're spending three-quarters of a billion dollars in the right place.

I just have a few points to make here. The amount of \$50 million is requested "to relocate, renovate or rebuild flood-affected homes in First Nations communities to provincial standards." Kudos to the government for addressing this issue. I would hope that somewhere in the very near future the federal government will pick up most of this cost as it should be a federal issue and not a provincial issue, but if the feds aren't going to step up to the plate and address the issue immediately, then we definitely need to do that.

The Education estimate includes \$9,050,000 in spending. We all know that that's money that's needed, but I would like to point out that over 50 per cent of this amount was spent in the Premier's own riding to renovate one school and put up a temporary gymnasium. There seems to be a little inequity here when one

constituency gets 50 per cent of this amount of funding for three communities.

I'd also like to draw attention to some of the Municipal Affairs issues: \$378,572,000 of this amount is Municipal Affairs, and it will all be operational spending. In the budget estimates last spring I did point out that the Alberta emergency . . .

The Chair: Unfortunately, your time has expired. There may be some time later on. I thank you for your comments.

I will now recognize the member from the third party, and you have 10 minutes.

Mr. Hehr: I'd like to start with a point of clarification, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Please do.

Mr. Hehr: Well, I've come to the conclusion that I may be wasting my time here. I'm hoping you can enlighten me as to why I'm wrong and what, in fact, this exercise is, because it appears to me to be one of futility. In my five years previous here when we have done supplementary supply estimates, I've been of the understanding that the opposition MLAs split their time between asking questions and ministers responding to try and give us some information as to what, in fact, is going on. That has happened the last five years, and that has been how it was done. I'm wondering whether you could enlighten me as to whether there's been a change in that process. I know the Deputy Government House Leader is here. Maybe he could explain to me why that process isn't being followed, because this appears to me to be absolutely ridiculous.

The Chair: Actually, hon. member, if you noted in my comments earlier, I mentioned that the time that is allocated actually has the potential to be between yourself and the minister in whatever fashion is desirable by both sides. If you choose to use the time to make a statement, that is perfectly fine. If you choose to ask the minister a question, the opportunity is there for the minister to respond.

Mr. Hehr: Well, with the ministers here, is that the process that we deem going forward? I ask the government if we'd participate in that. I can ask them questions. I believe there are seven or eight ministers of the Crown. They can get up and answer on behalf of their colleagues or do the best they can. Does that seem like a reasonable process, or are we going to keep jerking each other around here all afternoon?

The Chair: Well, the process as I outlined it, hon. member, is that the Minister of Finance or his designate – as it turned out, the motion was moved by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. In his absence, apparently, you are able to ask another minister of the Crown to offer, if he or she is able, some comment.

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Chair, do they have a designate here today? Who would be the designate? I know that in years before the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was the designate that we could ask questions of. Does the government at least have a designate here that we can ask these questions of if the minister is not here?

The Chair: Hon. member, the rules allow that any member of the Executive Council is able to answer your question. If the particular one that you would prefer to ask is not immediately available, feel free to direct your question to someone else who might be able to assist you.

So with that, I'm going to start the clock on your 10 minutes. You can hopefully use the time to the best of your ability.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. In any event, my questions are going to be surrounding what I feel are the appropriations being made and applications made under DRP funding and whether we are going to expect all of that money back from the federal government or if there's going to be a shortfall. I've heard estimates that this flood could cost us \$6 billion and that, roughly speaking, the federal government will give us \$3 billion back. I do note that many of these expenditures may or may not be covered by the federal government. I'd appreciate hearing from the ministers here about what their estimates are, how much will be covered, and how much will not.

So noting that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development is here, could I ask him what this \$19 million of expenditures is for, what he believes is the amount we will receive back from the federal government, and if he could give us some details about what that spending is.

The Chair: Hon. minister, if you could. Or we could ask another minister to supplement. Go ahead.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There may have been some confusion over what the plan was here, but I'm ready to answer questions that are specific to my ministry. If there are ministers who are not available, then we certainly would take the question under advisement and undertake to get answers. I will deal with questions that directly relate to Agriculture. I can start there. I've been sitting, listening patiently, and so far I haven't had direct, specific questions for my ministry. I'm going to make a few introductory comments, and then I'll endeavour to answer the question from the hon. member.

4:10

I just want to reflect a little bit on what the experience was for me and my ministry when this event happened. The urge was to get in a car or on a plane and get down to the scene of the event as quickly as possible. I resisted that, and I was on the phone a lot, talking to a lot of people involved with feedlots, irrigation, various types of agricultural production, and what I was hearing mostly was that the event was largely a river event. Producers have insurance. They have the ability to buy crop insurance and so on, so a lot of what we were concerned about was covered by insurance.

One of the things that I was very nervous about was our irrigation infrastructure. I talked to a number of people with various irrigation councils, and we dodged a bullet when it came to the irrigation infrastructure. We most certainly had damage, but it could have been far, far worse.

The focus of our department slowly evolved to a focus of rebuilding business. I want to acknowledge the leadership of the Premier on this. She was very decisive, and I think she also remembered the experience that we had had with Slave Lake. We had some devastating damage to property and business in Slave Lake, and it so happened that AFSC, Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, which my ministry is responsible for, played a major role in helping to rebuild.

So, very quickly, AFSC was asked to get involved in working on a program that would assist businesses to rebuild. Along with consultation with other ministries such as Enterprise and Advanced Education, we had a look at how many businesses potentially could be affected in the area. It's hard to predict and project exactly how many businesses might be affected and so on, but the number that we came up with, to my understanding, was 1,500 businesses. We started putting together a program that would assist...

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Chair, I asked him how much of this money he expects to get back from the federal government. It's a great speech, but...

The Chair: Okay. Hon. member, this is your time, so if you've heard enough from this minister and you'd like to make some more points, please go ahead.

Mr. Hehr: I'm just trying to clarify what I asked. How much of this money do you expect to get back from the federal government? Is it 90 cents on the dollar for all of these expenditures, or do you think there's going to be a shortfall?

The Chair: Can you answer that question, hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations?

Mr. Dallas: I sure can, Mr. Chair. If you go to, in the estimates, the amended 2013-14 fiscal plan, which is towards the back of the document, and you open the first page called Fiscal Summary – Operational Plan, the answer is right there. In the revenue section it shows the book revenue under the line item 2013 Alberta Flood Assistance Federal Transfer as \$3.117 billion.

Now, if you look at the operational expense just half a page down below, you'll see a line item there that says: 2013 Alberta Flood Assistance, \$4.163 billion. So the difference between those two numbers, which is just about a billion dollars, is the difference in terms of the revenue we don't expect to get back from the federal government based on the assumptions that we've made today.

I think you heard the conversation initially when the federal minister announced the funding and then the Premier's response to that, and I think everyone agreed that the number would vary, but for the purposes of estimates there has to be an estimate, and that's what this is.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. minister of agriculture would like to supplement briefly.

Mr. Olson: Just a clarification. The hon. member also asked what the \$19 million from my department was. I was trying to tell him. If he's satisfied with my answer to date, then I'll just stop there and let him use his time for something else.

The Chair: Carry on, then, hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: If we can go to probably Treasury Board or his designate on this one, in Aboriginal Relations an operational supplementary amount of, I believe, \$50 million was requested for the 2013 Alberta flood. I guess it was for rebuilding homes. I wonder: how many homes were affected, how many are going to be rebuilt, and are we supposed to be receiving all of that money back from the federal government in this regard?

The Chair: Hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, can you answer that?

Mr. Griffiths: Yes. I don't have the number of homes off the top of my head, but I can get you that. We've pointed out that members on-reserve are still full-fledged Albertans and that they deserve the same sort of supports that the rest of the province has received in these floods, Mr. Chairman, so we have sent a letter to the federal government highlighting exactly how much those costs are going to be to repair and rebuild the homes to provincial safety code standards. We've received no response yet, but we're very confident that the federal government will live up to their

obligations and will continue to build, just like they would for the rest of the Albertans affected by the flood.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Okay. I guess this is again to the minister of the Treasury or his designate. Under Education there's an additional, I think, \$9 million going to enrolment stabilization, operating supports and services for schools. Obviously, my question pertains to the fact that education is underneath the provincial government's jurisdiction and whether these supports – I don't know – fall particularly under the DRP program. Is this money going to be fully coming back from the federal government, or is there some split in the funding mechanism? Will the Alberta government be on the hook for more than the 90 per cent that we're supposed to be getting in flow-through dollars?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much. You're right. The \$9 million for those communities is to stabilize the funding because, of course, when the student population is determined, we know some people won't have relocated back into their communities. It's very important to make sure that the school boards and those schools have stable funding because there will be an influx in population at some point going forward. We witnessed that, frankly, in Slave Lake. This is one of those costs that we know we need to meet, but there is nothing through the federal disaster recovery program to offset that cost that we'll incur. But we know it needs to be done, so this is one of the places where we've stepped up.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you.

Now, if we could go to the hon. Municipal Affairs minister. Many of the emergency centres that we set up: I don't believe we receive federal dollars for those under the DRP program. Can you describe under the 378 million or so dollars we spent how much you anticipate getting back from the feds under the DRP program and how much will be eaten by the Alberta treasury?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Yes. Thank you very much, hon. member, for the question. I'll just run through these so that it breaks down some of the information for you.

Out of the \$378 million that Municipal Affairs is asking for, approximately \$172 million of that was advances to communities, 18 municipalities in particular. Some got 25 per cent. Some requested 50 per cent because of the extent of the devastation. Those were advances that were DRP eligible.

Mr. Chairman, \$54.6 million was to lead the government in our work to respond to and recover from the floods, support for flood-affected communities and to the First Nations; \$25.6 million of it was for increased health care costs related to the flood, some of which was for patient evacuations, moving services, relocating folks; \$25 million of it was for mental health services advanced in this year because we knew the emotional impact that the flood was going to have and anticipated that there would be increased costs; \$23.8 million of it was for disaster recovery payments to Albertans recovering from the floods so far under the DRP; and \$20 million was for immediate stabilization to address erosion damage. It's not specific to homes and the relocation of homes, but it's to rebuild or stabilize the riverbanks, those sorts of programs.

4:20

All of those are DRP eligible for up to 90 per cent. What isn't DRP eligible is \$15.45 million for the feasibility analysis of several proposed flood mitigation projects – those are costs that we're going to incur that will not be federally eligible – and \$42 million for financial support to stabilize municipal revenues from the loss of property taxes because no one is paying property taxes on the homes that were damaged. Now, that's just the first year. So those two are the only two costs right now on our list and our request that are not DRP eligible.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hehr: Now, I hear a little bit of a difference there in your request and what you're actually going to get paid for. How certain are you, especially on that mental health component, that you've earmarked some dollars? It doesn't seem to me, at least from sitting over here, that that ties neatly into a line item on the DRP payment plan. To me, I think you're whistling Dixie on getting that money back, but maybe you can tell me otherwise.

Mr. Griffiths: Well, maybe I should clarify a bit, Mr. Chairman. There's the disaster recovery program, the DRP. Now, that's the provincial government program where we help cover, specifically, costs to people for the damage to their homes or loss of their homes. We cover loss of and damage to municipal infrastructure, and then we repair provincial infrastructure as well. It also covers, specifically, emergency response over and above for the emergency.

Now, the federal government program isn't called DRP. It's the – I don't know. It's got a longer name. Anyway, their program covers our costs that are eligible. Now, those are DRP costs, but they also incur some other costs as well. So we're anticipating the advances to the municipalities, which are based on the destruction of their infrastructure, their costs over and above for fire services and emergency responders, and their challenges with operations when many places had their town offices closed. All of those costs are DRP eligible.

Our costs when it comes to the \$25 million for mental health can be covered under the federal program. They're not called DRP because they're not provincial DRP programs. They are our costs incurred. They're not going to municipalities or the homeowners, but they still are eligible costs under the federal program for costs over and above to manage the disaster appropriately. I hope that clarifies.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, just so you know, for the record you have until 4:28 p.m. to complete your portion.

Mr. Hehr: Until 4:28 p.m. Well, I guess, then, I'd just ask a global question of the minister. There have been estimates that the total cost to the taxpayer at one level or another is going to be \$6 billion. We see in this, as the minister of intergovernmental affairs explained, that there appears to be a discrepancy right now between what's been asked for, the approximately \$4.1 billion by the province, and the \$2.8 billion or \$3.1 billion committed to by the government. It appears to me, at least from where I'm sitting, that there's going to be a \$3 billion shortfall that the Alberta treasury is going to pick up. [interjection] No? Well, then, can you describe to me: how much, in your estimate, at the end of the day is the Alberta government going to have to eat on the total flood costs not covered under any federal government program? Has your ministry looked into this? Are there any estimates out there?

If I can tie on more one thing, I think you guys may be going down the path of adding \$830 million in flood mitigation costs to the budget. I'll just ask: is anyone asking over there how we're going to pay for all this stuff?

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much. The \$6.1 billion that we estimate are costs incurred already are the DRP eligible programs that we run. Some from the provincial government will not be DRP eligible, and I've named a couple already. I think the element that you're missing out of the \$3.1 billion is the insurance coverage. The stark difference between this disaster and a disaster like Slave Lake is that there was extensive insurance coverage for Slave Lake. The insurance portion for this, although it won't cover the overland flooding portion that we're responsible for, is still going to be very extensive, and that's what adds it up to the potential \$6.1 billion loss that we're anticipating right now.

We ask ourselves every day, and we work very hard – I've been asked, I think, constantly by the media how we're going to pay for this. We know that approximately – and, again, these are estimates – \$3.1 billion is going to be eligible through the federal government, that we will incur some costs to the provincial government. We're still working on those numbers. Then a lot will be covered by insurance as well. They have very significant costs that they've incurred privately.

Our job and what we're paid for is to figure that out, but ultimately we had to be there for Albertans. It wasn't possible for us to figure out how we're going to pay for it and then respond. We had to be there. That's what government does. This is one of its core obligations, and I know you agree with me. We'll continue to work on it going forward. We look forward to your help in figuring out what we're going to do to pay for that.

Mr. Hehr: Why, thank you. I figured out why I was here this afternoon, and I appreciate that process much more than the last hour of my life, which I don't think I'll get back any time soon.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

At this time I'll recognize the members of the fourth party. If you're inclined, you can make statements or use the process similar to what was used by the last member.

Ms Notley: I think we'll try the process that we just had end there, the back and forth. We do have a few questions, perhaps not as many, but we'll see where it goes. I found that definitely more helpful than what we had just gone through before, so that's what I'd like to do if possible. Thank you.

I want to begin by following up on one of the questions that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo asked, and that was starting off with the \$50 million from Aboriginal Relations. I, like the previous member, am very pleased that we are injecting money into those First Nation communities to ensure that they receive adequate disaster support, so that is all good.

The question that I have, though, does relate, again, to the issue of how many homes actually need to be refurbished or rebuilt. I know that the one minister who answered was not totally aware of those numbers, but I'm hoping that someone can get that. Oh; it appears as though he was actually e-mailed in the interim. I will say that at one point I heard an announcement, and I did a rough calculation of the numbers at the time. It sounded to me like we were looking at half a million dollars or \$450,000 per house or something, and that seemed quite generous. I thought that perhaps we needed to get more information about exactly how that money is going to be spent. I'm, you know, totally in support of the purpose behind it, but I just want to make sure that what I

originally heard was a misstatement in some fashion. If I could get more information on exactly what is being refurbished, how much is being refurbished, and how much is being dedicated to the training that I believe is also part of that investment, that would be helpful.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much. I checked my notes. I'm sorry; I should have done that earlier. We had professional engineering assessments go in on the First Nations reserve that were so heavily impacted. On the Stoney Nakoda and the Siksika nations right now the professional engineers are saying that approximately 600 homes need to be rebuilt or repaired, but that also includes water and septic systems, the road, the cleanup and removal of destroyed homes.

Of course, on the First Nations, like in other places in the province of Alberta, we've had some homes that are specifically located in the floodway, and there's no way we want to rebuild them there. So when we collect the homes and move them up the hill, where it will be safer, it's critical that we also make sure that there are the proper septic and water systems and that. We anticipate that the federal government will pick up those costs as well. This really is about rebuilding the homes to make sure that they meet the same standards that every other Alberta home meets.

I hope that answered your question.

Ms Notley: Actually, that's helpful. That's more houses than I had originally heard. I do know that. So that makes the math a little bit better.

I am curious, though, about what percentage or what the global amount is that's being dedicated to the training portion of the money that is being provided. My understanding is that a portion of the money was also going to be used for training, either on maintenance or construction or some element of that. I wasn't sure. I'm just wondering if the minister is able to provide that information to me.

4:30

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to dig up some information and get back to you on that. I believe that that allocation is in Human Services, but I have to check the notes on the breakdown because the question is about training. I know that we initiated a program, and it's between Human Services as well as Aboriginal Relations, to make sure, since we're doing so much construction work and rebuilding so many homes, that we're also training for the long haul folks on First Nations with the skills that they need to carry on after we've done this rebuilding exercise. The exact dollar number: I'm going to check the notes; I don't have that off the top of my head. That is part of the program that we're operating on First Nations. [interjections] Thank you very much for that. Our associate minister does a fantastic job of rebuilding and indicated specifically that it's about \$8 million that we're dedicating towards that program, but it's not in these supplementary estimates. These supplementary estimates are up to date today, but that's the plan going forward for the program.

Ms Notley: I see. So the complete amount that was announced with respect to investment in the rebuilding efforts in the two First Nations communities is not included in this supplementary supply

right now. Right now we've got \$50 million, and you're saying that there's at least another \$8 million and potentially others.

I see that the minister is here.

Mr. Campbell: Just because I saw you on TV.

Ms Notley: I'm sure.

Thankfully, he's here and now quite enthusiastic, I'm sure, about answering the question that I asked, which is just basically: what is the total amount that was dedicated to the First Nations recovery, and how much of that is dedicated to the retraining piece?

Mr. Campbell: There's \$83 million that's dedicated to Siksika, and there will be about the same, I think about \$85 million, to Stoney. On top of that there's \$10.3 million which is dedicated to training. The \$50 million that we're asking for in the supplementary estimates is just the money that we'll spend up to March. In the new budget we'll have more monies dedicated for the rebuild.

Ms Notley: Okay. Well, then that raises another question because that now brings back my original question. If we are looking at around \$185 million in total and we're talking about, I believe, around 600 homes to be refurbished or moved or rebuilt, what's the average cost per home that is being anticipated here? That seems awfully high based on my rough math.

Mr. Campbell: Well, it's not just the homes themselves. You have to understand that in some of the areas, especially in Siksika, we're actually moving the whole community. We're not just rebuilding homes. We're also talking about infrastructure, so water and sewer and gas lines. This will also include some of that. Same when you get to the Stoney reserve; we have issues with roads, culverts. This is not just replacing houses. This is actually a total rebuild of the community.

Again, some houses will be minimal in the sense that we will replace flooded basements, but we've also made the commitment that, for example, if there are other issues within the house, we will repair them to Alberta standards. Each home is going to be different. I can say to you that for a new build we're probably looking in the neighbourhood, I want to say, of \$200,000 for about a 1,500-square-foot bungalow. All the homes have been coded through an engineering firm, so we have red, yellow, green, and black, and we'll move forward on each home as we can.

Again, we have different challenges depending on where we are. In Siksika we've already got temporary housing in place. I'm going to sign an MOU with Stoney next week. We've finally been able to get the three chiefs to come to agreement, and we'll sign an MOU. We've actually started the temporary build in Stoney, but we now will be able to start to move people out, repair homes, and start some of the rebuilds as we move forward.

Another \$10.3 million for training will be divided between Siksika and Stoney because one of the commitments we made in the partnership is that we'll use First Nations contractors and provide training for First Nations people so that they can help rebuild their own communities.

Ms Notley: Okay. Well, that is helpful. I think we're still going to ultimately want to hear what the breakdown is in terms of the complete rebuild versus the upgrade versus whatever because my rough estimates show, not obviously including the cost of infrastructure, which may well be quite significant – and I'm the first to admit that I'm not your go-to person when you're looking for an estimate on a sewer system. Nonetheless, it's worth getting

a sense of because, otherwise, we're looking at about \$288,000 per home, assuming that all 625 homes require that \$288,000. It just seems a bit much.

So just a little bit more of a breakdown would be helpful. I mean, we're in the ballpark, but a little bit more of a breakdown would be more helpful for us to have.

Mr. Campbell: Well, what I can say, Mr. Chair, is that we've already found about \$10 million in savings in Siksika. We went with what our engineers told us, but that's not to say that we're not going to continue to look for savings as we move through the process. Again, my department tells me that we're probably looking at about \$10 million savings in Siksika already, so as we move through the process and get better at this – I mean, again, this is something that we haven't done before. It's the right thing to do in the sense of moving forward and making sure that the people in these communities have a place to live and that we rebuild those communities. That's a commitment that our Premier has made. I'm very proud of the fact that it is a true partnership between us and the First Nations.

Ms Notley: Thank you. Another area where I have some questions relates to I think it's about \$66 million from Human Services. My understanding is that this relates almost entirely to the cards – I don't know if they were credit cards or cash cards – that were distributed to Albertans in need.

I don't know if he remembers, but I remember running into the associate minister at one point and very briefly having that conversation with him and saying: you know, it's all great that we're going to help these business owners rebuild, but what about their employees who are sitting at home and not getting paid right now? And he said: oh, we're about to do something on it. So it appears that they did. I'm curious just to know, generally speaking, how many people received a form of assistance. Was the amount that was distributed consistent from person to person, or did it vary based on need? What were the criteria that were used? If it varied, what was the range of assistance that was provided in terms of, you know, the least amount typically provided, the largest amount typically provided, and the most common amount typically provided, and is that ongoing at this point?

The Chair: The hon. Associate Minister of Services for People with Disabilities.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can't actually share the numbers that went to individuals, whether they were different and why they were different. I can tell you that 18,868 cheques were delivered, totalling \$32,189,442; 18,097 payments were issued on debit cards, and that amounted to \$31,393,619. So that's a total of \$63.58 million. In addition to that, we had \$652,000 in administrative costs, and we're still expecting a future expenditure of about \$1.76 million. That's not in cards, though; that program is past its deadline. I think that's in administrative costs, IT costs, that kind of thing.

I would defer to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who might be aware if we gave different amounts to individuals and why.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you. I apologize because I've had a lot of stuff going through my head for the last few months. If I recall correctly, it was around a thousand dollars per person when they were out of their home for longer than seven days. Then there was an amount for... [interjection] He's got the exact numbers written down, but I can tell you that it was 56,000 people who

were out of their homes for more than seven days that were assisted.

The debit cards, the cash cards, that were issued to people had a prescribed amount for an individual and then a prescribed amount for a family, so it was very consistent. It needed to be consistent because, of course, we were issuing these cards within days and hours. So it was a set amount. That didn't stop Human Services from enhancing other programs that they had to assist people who needed special care and assistance just as they always do.

4:40

The Chair: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you. It turns out that if you just flip to the other briefing notes, Mr. Chair, it tells you that the eligibility for payments was based on family composition. It was \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per child, and you had to have a minimum of a seven-day evacuation order in order to qualify for the assistance.

The Chair: Hon. member, you still have five minutes if you choose to use it.

Ms Notley: Okay. Yes, a few more questions following up on that. First of all, I'm a little bit confused about the numbers because there are roughly 19,000 Albertans who received \$32 million or so in cheques and roughly 19,000 who received \$31 million in cards, which amounts to 38,000 Albertans, I believe, if we do our math. Then the Minister of Municipal Affairs said that, in fact, there were 56,000 Albertans who were out of homes. So is that excluding kids? Is that what the issue is?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you. To clarify, when cards were issued, they were loaded on the spot. Fifty-six thousand Albertans received assistance. But if a family of four came in where they received \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per kid, that was loaded on one card. The minister previously discussed the cheques issued and the cards issued, but it still amounts to 56,000 Albertans that were helped.

Ms Notley: Okay. So there was a one-time payment, and the criterion, then, was being out of your home for a week or more.

I guess my question goes back to the question that I asked the minister when I happened to run into him in the summer. We've got money for businesses, you know, that's been allocated. What about those folks who were working for those businesses and have been unemployed or had an interruption in earnings even for some period of time? Was there any provision made for them, or is there any provision with respect to the business support that's being provided or the loan guarantees that are being provided? I'm wondering about the folks who actually lost income because, you know, the restaurant they waited tables in was rendered unusable for three months. That's my question.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, I'm starting to realize that my memory is going. I don't recall the meeting that she's alluding to. Maybe it was to other people; I'm not sure.

Not through this program. This was direct cash benefit to those people that were evicted from their homes for more than seven days. There are the usual unemployment insurance and other programs, income assistance, available to people who require it but nothing that's identified in this flood spending that was spent on that purpose.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Notley: Yes. Well, I mean, the minister can be forgiven perhaps for having forgotten. We were just getting coffee at a meeting where I was otherwise, you know, probably yelling at him in front of the media or something. It was one of those kinds of things.

Mr. Oberle: Oh, now I remember.

Ms Notley: Nonetheless, we did raise that issue.

Mr. Mason: Just an ordinary day.

Ms Notley: Yeah. A very uncommon arrangement, I'm sure.

Nonetheless, the point that I want to make, then, is that I believe that through Agriculture and Rural Development and then potentially through Municipal Affairs, although I could be told that that is incorrect, we have money that is going to be dedicated either through a form of loan guarantees or through grants for business support. Again, I'm not necessarily opposed to that, but I am concerned that we seem to be missing a group of people who also suffered significant economic loss as a result of this natural disaster. So I am concerned, for instance, that we even have guarantees, the employees of those businesses that would receive the loan guarantees or the support would get the benefit of that, let alone those employees whose business may not be eligible. I'm just a little bit concerned that we may have overlooked some of the folks who suffered economic loss who are, you know, the ones that were less likely to be advocating to the minister directly or whatever the case may be.

I do understand that there's EI out there. That might work in some cases, but in other cases it might not. You could easily be someone who wasn't eligible for EI. Also, of course, EI is rather short-lived. Anyway, we don't need to talk about the shortcomings of EI. Suffice it to say that it probably is not the answer to a lot of people's questions.

The question is: has the government given any thought to the people who have suffered other forms of economic loss? Have there been any deliberations about that, and have you heard from people about that?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is through Agriculture. When we worked on what we called the hand-up plan, it was immediate financial assistance for up to 1,500 businesses that we could identify that may need a loan program in order to help them make business decisions about what they were going to do. There were 400 not-for-profits also eligible for that program. A portion of that is that when the loan program comes in, it's essentially interest-free while they make their business decisions.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, your time has expired.

We now have time, 20 minutes, where private members of the government caucus may engage in the debate.

Okay. Then we can go back thereafter to any private member. Is there any private member that would wish to speak at this point? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You've got five minutes, hon. member. You could ask some questions of the minister if you so desire.

Mr. Rowe: Okay. I was almost done when our time expired, so I don't really have a whole lot more to go, just a couple of things that now the minister may be able to help us out with.

I did want to mention that in our spring budget estimates I did question the low numbers in the total for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. I realize that nobody could have predicted this, and that's not what I'm suggesting at all. But in the three years prior to that, there was a consistently lower amount, other than one year when it was up slightly. It seems we need to get better prepared for this kind of thing. I would hope that when we come to budget estimates in the spring session next year, we could be a little better prepared for this. Again, I realize that we can't just do this.

I did want to mention that the total of three-quarters of a billion dollars in the supplementary supply seems a little low to me, to be honest with you. That may sound odd coming from the opposition, but when we first started tossing numbers around, we were talking \$3 billion, \$5 billion, \$6 billion. I guess my first question to the minister, then, would be: will we see another supplementary supply in the spring?

The Chair: I'll get the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to respond.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much. I appreciate the questions. I really look forward to doing the budget in the new year as well. I'm glad I have on record the hon. critic from the Wildrose, who has said that he supports more support for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. It's such a critical institution.

After the critic for Education said that we need more money for schools and the critic for Health said that we need more for seniors, I look forward to the first three questions every week to stop being, "Why are you spending so much money?" after they've agreed to every dime we spend.

4:50

The question was about the estimate seeming low. I'd just remind the member that these are supplementary estimates, so these are dollars that have been spent to date. When we talk about the \$6.1 billion, we're including all of the eligible insurance costs. We're talking about the provincial government's costs – our estimate right now is about \$1.7 billion – and then the federal government's costs, which should be about \$3.1 billion in eligible costs. When you put those all together, you get the \$6.1 billion, but of course not all of that has been expended yet.

Provincially we're anticipating that we'll get \$3.1 billion back from the federal government. We're anticipating that it could be about \$1.7 billion, but these are ongoing costs. Our Premier has been very clear that we would be there to help Albertans rebuild going forward and also that it wouldn't be rebuilt by Christmas. We're still going to have to build more homes. We're going to have to replace more infrastructure. We anticipate that that total cost we quote all the time is something that is spent from the beginning of the flood right through until we have its conclusion and there isn't a person left you can talk to in the province who doesn't say that the job is done. So it's not just this year's costs.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to respond to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and his recent comment, as we discuss the supplementary estimates, that the critic for Education would lead with his first three questions as to building schools and spending money and then ask the government to cut, on the other

hand. You know, this is the constant debate that we have in here. As I continually say, there's a middle ground here. What we're trying to say on this side is that you can prioritize your spending so that we can build the schools that we need. We're not asking for anybody to jump the queue in school building.

What we continually ask for is a public, prioritized list so that we know where projects are. Regardless of where you are in Alberta, regardless of what constituency you're in, the capital plan comes forward, and there will be a wish list from that school board. Now, if those projects are approved, that's terrific, but if they're not approved, they have no idea where they might be on the list. That is a giant frustration. To the minister: I think that even people in his own riding would want to ask the same question although I know he's got a bit of a strained relation with some of the school board representatives in his own riding. I think what he needs to realize is that around this province people want to know where they are on the list. The reason that people on this side advocate for a list is so that people will know when and where these schools are going to be built, so the people in the community will know when they can plan for them.

We would love to see money come from other areas.

Mr. Fawcett: Relevance.

Mr. McAllister: When we talk about this supplemental budget and the minister makes reference to one thing that we do, I think it's relevant for me to stand up and respond to what he said, so I'm happy to do that, Mr. Chair.

I would say again, as I said when I spoke initially to this, that I don't see \$9 million as excessive as a supplementary budget, that this is to put money forward to the districts that were hit hard by flooding. I did ask the Education minister, respectfully, if he could break that down and itemize it for us. You know, I think that's what any member of the government, opposition, or otherwise ought to do about taxpayer money.

I noticed that eventually the ministers came back and started taking questions during this, which is kind of what the Minister of Municipal Affairs said would happen initially, but for whatever reason it took an hour to get to that point. But note that I did respectfully ask that question and to this point haven't received an answer.

I would conclude, on the statement that was made, that the reason we on this side ask for money for schools is because it's what Albertans are asking for. Don't forget, Mr. Chair, that this government promised to build 50 schools and renovate 70 schools this term. As we're awarding more money to them today or effectively allowing them more money for flood relief, not one of those projects has been started. Now, we're more than a year and a half since the election. If it really was a priority, don't you think you'd have a shovel in the ground? The only shovel I see ought to be following somebody around to the podium when they make an announcement.

Back to the minister. I would say that I'm happy and my colleagues are generally happy to approve of prudent financial governing. The flood that hit Alberta – there's no question – obviously affected so many communities and so many people's lives that we ought to do all we can to help Alberta rebuild. I think that's the point of what we're doing here today. Again, I would have liked to have gone back and forth a little bit on some of those questions, but I guess that's the way that it goes.

I think of a community like – Mr. Chair, you're looking at me as if you want to tell me something. Do I have time? The time is okay?

The Chair: You've still got a minute and 23 seconds, hon. member.

Mr. McAllister: Perfect. Well, then I'll end on a very strong positive if I could, referring to what we're discussing today, and that would be the community of Redwood Meadows. You know, there is a community that somehow managed to dodge a real bullet. They could have lost that entire community, 300-plus homes, but somehow they managed to save it, and it took a lot of people.

The government has been very good in dealing with the people of Redwood Meadows and helping them rebuild. In fact, I intend on asking the minister and Member for Calgary-Klein to join me in Redwood Meadows so that I can take him around and show him some of the work that's been done, how they managed to save that community, and why it's important that work is done going forward. I know he's been briefed, but I would love him to walk that berm with me so that I can explain it to him and show him exactly what's going on. We don't need to announce it to the world and have any big media day but just to show the government's commitment. I bet we can arrange that.

The point is that over here we do support flood recovery. We do support proper budgeting, but when we ask tough questions financially, we do it because there are two ways to look at things. We can't just spend, spend, spend without justifying it. We're talking about \$625 million here today, and we are right to come in here today and ask the appropriate questions about where that is going. That's what this process has been about.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there others? You're going to respond, hon. minister? Please go ahead.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you. Actually, I didn't hear any questions out of that speech, again, and most of it was about the regular process, not about this budget. But I have the chance to respond because I raised it, so maybe I'll respond to a couple of things that were raised. The Member for Airdrie spoke first and didn't ask a single question about this, followed by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, who didn't ask a single question about all of this \$800 million. They spend a lot of time complaining about not having the opportunity to respond.

Mr. McAllister: What did the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View say?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Chair, I didn't interrupt him at all. I let him run.

The Chair: Please, the minister has the floor, hon. member.

Mr. Griffiths: They didn't ask a single question. They complained that there's 800-some million dollars here, yet they didn't have a single question about the budget, Mr. Chair. [interjection] I know the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills doesn't like to have any criticism, which is why he keeps beaking off.

Frankly, it's very easy to go through and see what the spending has been. We've got two other parties in there that have managed to ask some very good questions about what we're spending our money on for Albertans going forward to make sure that we can handle their issues.

Since we're responding to some of the questions, just like the previous member did, I know that the question was raised by the Member for Airdrie on how horrible this process and experience

was. He didn't ask anything about the budget, but he did go on to talk about how the Member for Highwood was frozen out in the early days of the floods. I just have to point it out that it gives the impression that it was the provincial government, but in this province emergencies are run by local officials. It was local firefighters and local police and local emergency responders that were all together in the community of High River, managing the local response. The impression they try and give is that the provincial government had some say, which we didn't. We don't get involved in that, Mr. Chair, but they'd asked the Member for Highwood to leave High River in the emergency response.

Mr. Wilson: Point of order.

Mr. Griffiths: And I don't want anyone . . .

The Chair: I'll come back to you, hon. minister.

Your point of order? A citation, hon. member?

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Wilson: Citation 23(b)(i), speaking to the question under discussion. I have no idea why the Minister of Municipal Affairs feels it necessary to discuss matters of the Member for Highwood at this point. [interjections] You had the opportunity to call a point of order earlier, and perhaps you could have done it. [interjections]

The Chair: Hon. members, please. The Member for Calgary-Shaw has the floor.

Mr. Wilson: I would just ask the chair to direct the minister to speak . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I would be very pleased to respond on this point.

Hon. members, I'm going to remind both sides of the House. We've had a fair amount of debate on this matter, and I have allowed quite a bit of latitude on both sides where the debate has strayed quite a distance from the topic at hand, being the estimates. I think that's maybe a good reminder. I'm going to leave it at that, hon. member. I'm going to remind the minister, as I'm reminding the members from this side of the House, that it's important that we stick to the topic at hand, which is the estimates. If that's the case, if you're able to do that, then I won't have to bring anybody back from either side of the House when you stray past that point. I believe that I've allowed a lot of latitude both ways, but I'm going to stop at this point. I'm going to ask both sides of the House to stick to the matter at hand, and I would consider the matter closed at this point, hon. member.

I would ask the minister to continue and remind you, hon. minister, to please stick to the matter at hand.

Mr. Griffiths: I'm happy to as long as they do, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you.

5:00

Debate Continued

Mr. Griffiths: I haven't heard any questions about the actual budget from the opposition that haven't been answered. The only question that I understand hasn't been answered yet is about the hand-up plan that was asked about earlier. I just wanted to point out that it was 1,500 businesses that were eligible for the hand-up plan, which is a loan guarantee and then interest relief for that

program. Also, 400 not-for-profits. It was anticipated, Mr. Chairman, that those who accessed the program would want to keep their employees on staff and repay their loans so that they can continue to make sure that they make the appropriate business decisions.

Our understanding so far is that any employees that were out of work for a short time did have the traditional programs run through the province of Alberta and the federal government, such as employment insurance, to cover them. We've heard no significant group at all come forward and say that they haven't received some benefit from some level of government to take care of them in the interim while they experienced unemployment because of the flood, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there others? The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess this is a constituency-based question. As most of you are aware, my constituency, Calgary-Buffalo, is surrounded on one side by the Bow River and the Elbow River on the other and thus had a disproportionate number of individuals and families affected by the flood. I do note and actually applaud the government for moving quickly on getting immediate supports in the form of those money cards that allowed many of my constituents to have an easier time of it throughout that particularly stressful period.

However, still to this day estimates are that there are up to 3,000 of my constituents who are not in their regular homes and are still living in accommodations that are not their usually dwelling place, yet they're still covering mortgages. They still in some instances have extraordinary expenses piling up. I believe I did talk to a member of government at one point in time or other, but has there been any consideration of recognizing that there may be a unique subset of Albertans, maybe 2,000 people, who have been disproportionately affected with extraordinary expenses related to them being out of their home and covering the cost of two locations, those matters? If that's being considered, could any programs be used to address the additional hardship?

The province moved very quickly for people who had been out of their homes for seven days, which I thought was great, but we have some Albertans who have been out of their homes now for four months and could be and, in fact, are racking up additional expenses. I've heard from many of them in my constituency office. I recognize that it's very difficult to try and tailor everything to any given program and to have it ongoing forever and ever.

The Chair: I think the Minister of Infrastructure will start, with a supplement from the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been wanting to answer this question for a while, so I'll butt in here and give my colleague a chance to get ready for that answer.

I did have a couple of questions, I think, from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. I was writing them down and waiting till I had them all to speak. My department is here to request a supplementary amount of \$100 million in operational money for the '13-14 flood relocation program. The remaining required funding for this program will be included in the 2014 budget. Also, we're requesting \$5 million for the 2013 Alberta flood recovery for planning a joint-use community resource centre in High Prairie.

The first question was: why was the \$100 million not capital and operational? Well, the flood relocation program is a program

that's operational. I mean, we're going to buy out the properties and remove the homes, and the land will be left probably for a park or something like that. It's not really a good capital investment. It's an operational plan.

I think the second question was: what would it cost for the resource centre? We have \$5 million for planning this joint-use community resource centre. The reason it's for planning is because we want to make good use of taxpayers' dollars. There are other agencies in the community such as the town of High River, the MD of Foothills, Foothills school division, you know, and our building, so we're looking at doing it jointly to save the taxpayers money. We're to have this resource centre that's jointly shared by all of us. The \$5 million is for the planning part of it, so the exact cost will greatly depend on the space required by the other community partners and the resources that they have available to them to contribute. A cost estimate can't be provided right now. We need to further refine the requirements and work together, and we'll do a joint project.

I think those were the two questions.

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

If the Minister of Municipal Affairs would finish off the other half.

Mr. Griffiths: Yes. Thank you. The question that was just asked about people who might be overly burdened because they're trying to pay for two places at once if they're not back in their home and what sort of damage was done: right now we've been going door to door partnered with the Red Cross, and we've been taking people that are in our housing units in Calgary and High River, that are spread around southern Alberta right now. We haven't identified as many people as you've indicated for the whole province.

They've been self-selecting, so we had to start charging rent because we have some quite decent accommodations and thought that they could pay a portion. If I recall correctly, it's still \$400 below anticipated market value. That's the market value for rent, but that also includes all their food, their recreation, so it's a pretty reasonable price, I think, that we're charging.

We have been talking with and working with the banks, and there are a lot of banks that have special flood programs now available so that someone with a mortgage can defer that mortgage until they rebuild their house and deal with DRP. No bank wants to watch people have to foreclose on a mortgage for a house that no longer exists, because they can't live there. They've been very accommodating, and I'm not aware of any that haven't had some sort of program available for people in despair.

If you own a house and you're in High River and your home was destroyed or damaged, frankly, beyond repair, so it had to be rebuilt, not only do we anticipate and witness that banks are very accommodating, but you may still have property taxes to pay on that home, which can be burdensome, too, so we have the program available for municipalities for municipal tax relief. We know that a lot of people that have a property they can't live in anymore aren't going to want to pay property taxes in that community. We did the same thing in Slave Lake, so we've applied that program to any of the communities that experienced flooding so that individuals aren't paying property taxes on a home right now, but the municipality doesn't suffer by lacking those resources to provide services.

So far we've had nothing but praise for the comprehensive programs that we've put together, and I think we've accommodated everybody that has been brought to my attention.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe I asked several questions, and I haven't gotten an answer. Maybe the questions weren't clear, but I would like an answer at least to address the concerns of the community of Sundre.

Here we have a supplementary budget dealing with flood mitigation, and the community of Sundre is one of the top communities. You could classify it as one, two, or three, and it doesn't matter what number you put it in. It is threatened every spring. It has a history where it's gone under water in 2005, 2012, and now in 2013. I don't have record of one person who applied and got approved for the damage they suffered. When I'm looking at these estimates, the question I have is: where is the mitigation here for the community of Sundre so that we don't waste what we've already done?

5:10

Now, the question I had earlier had to do with the whole purpose – you bring this forward, and you're dealing with maps, flood mitigation maps, yet the river has moved an entire mile. [interjections] I know you don't understand because you don't listen, Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Try listening. The fact is that you have a map. The members say: we don't have a definition, but we're going to use money based on the accuracy of the maps. Those maps were constructed after the 2005 flood. The Red Deer River has moved over a mile. So if you don't have a definition of what a floodway is or what a flood fringe is – and it's no excuse to say, "Well, it's going to be the scientific definition from Alberta Environment," because the act doesn't say that. If that's what you're going to do, then put it in the act. Why don't they put it in the act?

Getting back to the money that's being spent, where is the mitigation so that we don't lose lives and millions and millions of dollars of infrastructure for the community of Sundre? When that river moved, it moved to a position where now the entire community is threatened. The scenario is considerably different than before the 2013 flood. The community of Sundre deserves an answer for all those questions. Where are they in this? How is it going to be done?

The Chair: Let's see if the Minister of Municipal Affairs can help you with that.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Under the Environment and Sustainable Resource Development budget it specifically says under operational that there's \$2 million for flood recovery to complete the additional studies under the provincial flood hazard identification program. That's the updates of flood mapping as you go along, for situations where the maps have changed significantly. Of course, that doesn't change the definition – the floodway is the floodway, and the flood fringe is the flood fringe – but we do need to identify if there are places where there has been significant movement of the river, which is typically in places where there is a lot of rock and sand, because it moves very quickly.

Also, Mr. Chairman, under capital for that budget \$96 million has been identified for restoration projects addressing erosion damage. I'm aware of the situation in that community and in a couple of others. It's not a disaster recovery program or even strictly mitigation to protect houses and communities; it's erosion damage, which is very critical. So that item is listed.

As far as the infrastructure costs he will have seen that an announcement was just made. But, Mr. Chairman, this budget

typically is costs incurred in the last few months which are not budget items. Since mitigation was just recently announced, what is going forward, no money has been spent on that yet. That's why it's not in the budget. You'll see that as we move forward.

The Chair: Other speakers? We still have time. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Sure. I'll try a couple of questions, Mr. Chairman. There is \$19.1 million for agricultural flood recovery, a \$4.1 million interest rebate on loans of up to \$1 million for two years to assist in rebuilding eligible businesses and agricultural producers, and \$15 million for a loan guarantee program. The province will provide a 75 per cent guarantee on loans up to \$1 million to help stabilize and rebuild agricultural producers and not-for-profit organizations. I'm not sure which minister this should be directed towards. [interjection]. Okay. Good. The hon. minister of agriculture, who's had to take remarkably few questions this session. You know, you really should have a scandal or something in your department so that you can see a little action.

Anyway, I am curious about how this is administered and how you make sure that the businesses that receive these loans are putting it towards the things that they're supposed to, that they're not getting workarounds so that they, you know, can use this as capital to invest in other business opportunities.

The Chair: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the hon. member for the question. I take it as a good sign that there aren't a lot of questions coming at me, but I'm always happy to answer questions either inside or outside this Chamber or do my best to have my department assist me. We're always only a phone call away from some sort of a crisis, and I'm well aware of that. Right now we haven't been in crisis mode, but we're dealing with serious issues.

To answer the hon. member's question, as I said earlier on, AFSC, the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, is the tool, the body, that we're using to assist in this program. There is a reason for that, and it is the great experience we had with the Slave Lake fire, where AFSC went in and did great work helping rebuild businesses there. I think it was something like 162 loans, about \$111 million. These loans were very effective in turning around a lot of businesses and getting them up and running again.

We did learn some things, though. When you think about the scope of doing that in one community that had the fire compared to the scope of multiple communities along rivers, there is a huge difference in the challenge that it would have been in terms of the resources that AFSC had at their disposal. We pretty quickly determined that it would be a good idea to use the banks that are already lending to people who are running the businesses in those communities, to facilitate and try to create an incentive for the banks to be involved. That's where the 75 per cent guarantee came in.

When you think about the time and the people who were struggling to find out how they were going to receive the necessary financing, it would be a lot easier for them to walk into their bank and talk to their loans officer that already had a file on them rather than go to AFSC and start from scratch. We feel as though that was very effective. The banks were very supportive, but it was also important for the banks to have some skin in the game, so to speak, to address your question about abuse of the program. That's why we did not provide a 100 per cent guarantee but a 75 per cent guarantee.

I can tell the hon. member that there hasn't been as big an uptake so far as we might have expected. Right now we've only got about 32 guarantees out there for about \$5 million. There is obviously some guesswork involved in trying to determine how many subscriptions there would be. There still could be more. People are still waiting to find out about insurance coverage and so on as well. That's basically the rationale. People are dealing with their banks in the normal course. They're also dealing with AFSC. In either case the scrutiny in terms of accountability for the money and so on is the same as it would be for any loan. We also have another program, which is the interest rebate. Actually, the uptake on that has so far been relatively modest as well. To date we're only at about \$4,000 in rebates actually paid out. Now, again, that could change significantly as time goes by. That's kind of a quick overview of the program and how we got to develop this program.

I would also add that the staff at AFSC were thrown into this and worked day and night – literally day and night – and through weekends and so on to let as many Albertans work to try to recover, to put the paperwork for this program together and work with the banks as well. I think the banks as well as AFSC staff certainly deserve some acknowledgement in terms of the hard work that they put together on this.

The Chair: Other questions? The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

5:20

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Going through this budget supplemental, there are a number of ministries where they pick out a particular direction for where the money is spent and where it is going to be spent relative to the community. So if I look at Education, it picks out a number of communities, and it identifies the specific project. If I look under environment and sustainable resources, it does the same. It follows suit. It says, "\$5,000,000 for local flood mitigation measures" taken in Medicine Hat.

Back to my question of Sundre. Now, I'm going to direct this question maybe to the Associate Minister of Seniors. The community of Sundre just received funding for their seniors' facility, which we thank you very much for. The whole community does. But according to the current maps and the potentially new maps the new seniors' facility is going to be either in a floodway or a flood fringe, depending on which definition we're going to go by. Now, we're talking about spending money, and this money has already been allocated. But I don't know what money in this budget is allocated to mitigating that provincial investment because it doesn't state that. So to any of the ministers who would have any knowledge of this: how are we going to protect that investment in the seniors' facility? This is significant, this does affect the whole community, and it's all about protecting this investment, that we're going to build this new facility. I question where this appears in this budget. How are we going to protect that community, that particular facility?

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs. There was a question about Education as well. We'll get to the Minister of Education next.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you. I guess I'll clarify again. In Environment and Sustainable Resource Development's budget it outlines \$96 million for restoration projects addressing erosion damage. I know it doesn't list the projects, Mr. Chair, because they're still assessing them and working with the communities to

identify exactly what needs to be done and the best way to do that. Now, that request from ESRD is a non-DRP eligible request. That's work going forward on ensuring that we address some erosion control challenges. Within the Municipal Affairs budget we have \$20 million that's been identified to restore riverbanks that are experiencing significant erosion damage which is specifically due to the June flooding. There is no list of specific projects in here because we're continuing to work with the communities, but this is what we've assessed that's required.

I'll let the hon. associate minister discuss the question about the seniors.

The Chair: The hon. Associate Minister of Seniors.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to give you the information, the member across had asked about the Sundre seniors' facility that's being planned. The last thing I would do is interfere with the municipal council and the direction of the siting. That's up to the development permit stage, and they're very well aware of which land is appropriate. The last thing I would ever do is interfere in that process. I know you're a champion for seniors' facilities in your riding. Stay tuned, be supportive, and work with your mayor.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Education on the education question.

Mr. J. Johnson: I appreciate the latitude, Chair. I realize Education was mentioned there, and there was a question on Education that I wasn't recognized for earlier that I'd just like to speak to: where some of the funds for the Education supps have gone. Then maybe the member can get back to his other questions.

Of course, most of the Education work down there was to protect some of the schools from potential decreases in enrolment and also the capital work. We had over 80 schools impacted by the floods. All but three of those were open in September, which is really good news. I can tell you that the final modular classrooms were filled. Well, in High River the final group is going to be full tomorrow. The final group of modular classrooms in Calgary was turned over, got the occupancy permits today, so the CBE will be working with those parents to nail down when those kids move in. Those are all done, and that's fantastic work. We've got 54 modulars, about 750 kids accommodated even though it wasn't as quick as we'd hoped.

We had great people working on the ground, including our deputy minister, Greg Bass, and Dean Lindquist, our ADM in capital, who were down there three days a week for the last three months. The superintendents of that area, Denise Rose and Scott Morrison, did great work, and I can point out that none of those people – and they worked with the local folks on the ground – ever got removed from the emergency operation centre for being disruptive, unlike the Leader of the Opposition. So I would point out that the \$9,500,000 that I think the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View asked about earlier is the \$9 million for enrolment stabilization.

We did the same kind of thing that we did in Slave Lake when that disaster hit that community. We gave, essentially, those schools, not the school board, a guarantee that if their enrolment decreased, fewer students in the school next year because of the disruption or for whatever reason, we wouldn't decrease their funding because predominantly the funding follows the students. We want to make sure that they have that stability, they have that certainty of funding, they don't have to let teachers go, and they don't have to take staff out and then try to restaff and retool up later. Then there was \$50,000 that we needed to invest in

resources from the Learning Resources Centre to help those schools retool up as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm wondering if the hon. Minister of Education would be willing to table a document that outlines the line items of the 80 schools, how much capital you've invested in each of those 80 schools.

The Chair: Relative to the supplemental, hon. member?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. Well, I think the question he just responded to is what the \$9 million was that his ministry has requested in the supplemental estimates. In a response to the question from the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View he suggested that there were 80 schools impacted and that you invested capital in 80 schools. I'm just asking the Minister of Education if he would be willing to table the document outlining specifically which 80 schools were impacted and how much money was spent on each of them.

Thank you.

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Chair, of the 80-plus schools that were impacted by the floods, we didn't invest capital in each one of those. For some of those, a good number of those, the cost to repair them from the storm or some water damage that might have got in was done out of insurance funds or even reserves from the school boards although, I believe, that was minimal. It was primarily insurance. The money that we invested – and I believe the capital in here is about \$19.9 million or \$20 million – is specifically for the modular classrooms in High River and for the CBE in Calgary as well as the Sprung structure that's being assembled or will be assembled in the Calgary region as well.

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

Mr. Anglin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I did not have a question for Education earlier. I just used it as an example of how they listed within this supplemental budget. But I will respond to that little snide comment about being disruptive. Our leader, who lives in that community, went to the aid of her neighbours. If that is his definition of disruptive, that's a perverted sense of disruptive.

Basically, what I want to talk about – and the hon. Associate Minister of Seniors pointed this out. This is the key here. The entire community of Sundre is now in a floodway, according to a map. The proposed seniors' facility is either in the floodway or the flood fringe, according to these maps. This is the point that I'm trying to make. The ESRD estimate right here talks about \$5 million for local flood mitigation measures to be taken in Medicine Hat. Understandable. I know what happened in Medicine Hat.

There are provisions elsewhere in the bill. What I'm looking for here is – it says: "\$96,000,000 for restoration projects addressing erosion damage." I'm not talking about erosion damage. What I'm talking about is an entire community under threat. The river has moved. That is the crux of this matter right now. It has moved a mile from where it was in the 2005 flood. It has actually moved a mile since the 2010 flood. It has moved significantly and now threatens the town in the next flood. That is significant.

We're looking at a situation where we have investment. The minister has just come down recently, and he's right. I thanked him, and I will continue to do so. I'm supportive of the project. I've been advocating for that project. They need it. What are we doing to protect it? There's nothing listed in this that says that. Where is it? Isn't this government aware of what's going on there? We are putting millions of dollars at risk, new money, not to mention the entire economy of this community, and the question is: how are we going to protect it? Where is this money here? What we've done in the past no longer applies. Things have changed. That's the point. Even if you look at the spurs and you look at the berms, they're in the wrong place now because the river has moved. That is significant. So how do we protect this?

5:30

The Chair: Hon. member, I'm going to ask the minister to respond, but I'm going to remind you that this seems like something for a future budget item. If he can't give you a satisfactory response, we may need to move on to another subject.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development I'll lay out a few more details of the program. It's for bank stabilization, for repair and mitigation of erosion damage to property or infrastructure, and larger community flood mitigation work such as dikes and berms. That's just this program that is being asked for here. The Alberta government will fund up to 100 per cent of the project costs up to \$2 million and 75 per cent of the costs after the first \$2 million is spent. Applicants run their own projects to make sure that they meet the requirements, and the ESRD staff will continue to work with the municipality to make sure that it complies with the Water Act and with the Public Lands Act.

To date, Mr. Chairman, 19 projects worth over \$37 million have already been approved, so there's lots of room left in the program. Some of those projects that have been approved are projects in Calgary, Medicine Hat, High River, Canmore, Big Horn, Rocky View, and in Mountain View county. More applications will be coming, but we have not received one from that community, so I encourage him to work with the community to make an application.

He may also want to note that there was a recent announcement about flood mitigation in particular, that was just made, which is now open for communities to apply to. His question: what are we going to do, and why isn't there a solution? We're working with the community, and we anticipate that they will likely come forward with some interesting ideas about what they're going to do to handle it and apply to the program, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Any other speakers?

Mr. Anglin: To the hon. minister: the community of Sundre has applied, and they plan on following up with the next application, so I just want to correct you on that. There is an application in from the community of Sundre, and if you're not aware of that, then we need to track that down.

The Chair: Thank you.

If there are no other speakers, hon. members, we can call the question on this item. I'm certainly not trying to cut debate off, but if there's been ample opportunity and members are satisfied . . .

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: Okay. The question has been called.

**Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2013-14
General Revenue Fund**

Agreed to:
Aboriginal Relations
Operational \$50,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Agriculture and Rural Development
Operational \$19,115,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Education
Operational \$9,050,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Environment and Sustainable Resource
Development
Operational \$2,000,000
Capital \$101,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Human Services
Operational \$66,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Infrastructure
Operational \$100,000,000
Capital \$5,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Municipal Affairs
Operational \$378,572,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Transportation
Capital \$33,560,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, because we did not reach the three hours allocated – we finished early – I'm assuming you would like to ask for a motion that the committee rise and report the estimates.

Mr. McIver: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will move that the committee rise and report those estimates.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, for the following departments.

Aboriginal Relations: operational, \$50,000,000.

Agriculture and Rural Development: operational, \$19,115,000.

Education: operational, \$9,050,000.

Environment and Sustainable Resource Development: operational, \$2,000,000; capital, \$101,000,000.

Human Services: operational, \$66,000,000.

Infrastructure: operational, \$100,000,000; capital, \$5,000,000.

Municipal Affairs: operational, \$378,572,000.

Transportation: capital, \$33,560,000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

**5:40 Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 32
Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and move third reading of Bill 32.

Of course, it's been under discussion. The main elements of that are giving the authority to municipalities to control playground zones and also giving the government of Alberta the authority to

designate lanes on highways as well as a number of other somewhat housekeeping issues. Those are the main elements.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

My apologies, hon. members. We missed a step in the order of proceedings, so I will have to come back to the hon. Minister of Transportation.

Introduction of Bills

The Deputy Speaker: I need to recognize the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to introduce the supplementary supply bill.

Bill 36 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2013 (No. 2)

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 36, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2013 (No. 2). 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.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a first time]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 32 Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act (continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I am still pleased to rise today and move third reading of Bill 32.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to talk about Bill 32 one more time, and I rise in support of the legislation. Our caucus had good, lengthy discussions about it and talked about it and appreciated many of the grassroots opportunities, the efficiencies put into the bill, as I've already mentioned a couple of times. Our uncertainty seems to revolve around two areas. You know, we expressed our concern over taking out the word "probable" from the "reasonable and probable" obligations that police officers would have to have for a start. There is some uncertainty as to whether "reasonable and probable" does mean the exact same thing or close to the same thing as "reasonable." I thought it was foolhardy for the government to take the chance that this may be challenged later on. We know what happened in Committee of the Whole with that.

Many people in our caucus expressed concern and ideas over whether the high-occupancy vehicle lanes would work, especially in Fort McMurray, where infrastructure development has been slow for us to capitalize on the royalties that Albertans need and deserve. Hopefully, highway 63 twinning is working on the timeline it was supposed to.

A lot of concerns over the busier streets like the Deerfoot in Calgary and the busier places in Edmonton on how the government will implement these plans. I trust and hope the communication will be there and that the regulations will be in the proper order for that.

The biggest concern with the bill may have been the way it was released. I'll just remind everyone that a press conference was held, a release was held before this bill was properly disclosed to the opposition members and the opposition critics and to this House, which we felt was an infringement on our duly elected authority and in my case the 40,000 Cypress-Medicine Hatters that I do represent and in our case, potentially, the 340,000 votes that we did receive in the last election. I do appreciate, though, the Minister of Transportation's efforts once we did have our meeting and how thoroughly and how well the bill was explained to me and then the opportunity to discuss this.

I hope that in the future, as we all strive to make this House better for all Albertans, we will be informed early as to the contents of bills and our opportunity to help make all of these as good as possible for Albertans. The unintended consequences and the ability to go wrong in any bill is there, so it certainly doesn't hurt to have 17 extra sets of eyes on it or in our case on this side all opposition members.

Once again, we are in support of the bill. I am in support of the bill, and look forward to the opportunity and the chance to, hopefully, make all roads safer for Albertans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, and I'm going to support this bill also. I thank the hon. minister for bringing it forward, but there are concerns. I hope these concerns do get addressed sometime in the future. The minister had mentioned earlier based on a given court case that reasonable meant the same as probable. In research in that case we find that that answer is not true. It doesn't mean the exact same thing. Reasonable is a degree of rationality, and probability is a degree of an event actually happening. As a matter of fact, the court, when it looked at this argument, looked at it, I think, fairly thoroughly. What the court ruled was that they weren't the same, but it did say that the reasonable test in the case in front of it met the same test as probability. That's what the court ruled. I'm sure the lawyers can dissect that.

What the court also talked about, which was extremely important, was that very critical balance between the right to privacy, the right to be protected from unreasonable search and seizure, and, of course, the right of the state to do its duty in law enforcement and what needs to be done to obtain a search warrant. As a matter of fact, when the court looked at this, what it basically did strike down was the provision that required a court to issue a search warrant even if the test was met. The court wanted to maintain the flexibility to look at each case individually.

Now, one of the arguments that will be coming forward – again, this is something so it is consistent with unreasonable search and seizure and probable cause – is that it's forever evolving. Looking at it from that perspective, it probably would have been safer to leave the words "and probable" in the act because that would have covered the bases for the people who are going to enforce this act and make sure that we try to protect both sides.

It doesn't prevent any court case from coming forward. People have their issues, there are always circumstances that are unforeseen, and there are misapplications and incorrect applications of any type of law enforcement procedure. All the mechanisms are there in our judicial system to have those adjudicated.

The idea of having high-occupancy lanes for vehicles, the HOV lanes. I agree with the minister. If you put them in the right spots,

they are efficient. They work well. I've experienced it like many people here who have travelled and found these. If you use them incorrectly, well, then they need to be re-evaluated and, you know, put to a place where they're far more efficient. Again, efficiencies have to be measured. That is one of the major points of the bill where I think we can do fairly good service, provided it is applied correctly. I think it will serve our larger communities in particular extremely well.

5:50

The other provision in here with the playgrounds I have to agree with. Local decision-makers probably have a better grasp on handling this decision on how they want to do this. To allow that to go back to local decision-makers is something that I think everyone in my party will support.

The use of military police on highways. I'm not too keen on that issue. I don't know any more details than what's been provided in the bill, but I caution how we would apply that, how far that would extend. I suspect we will get those answers once regulations are known, but that is within the purview of the department or the ministry. I would suggest that what we need to do when we bring this forward and write these regulations is exercise a much larger degree of caution on how military police would be used. I do know today that there are provisions – and I don't know what those provisions are – on how the civilian police force and the military police force do interact. They always have done that. I just don't know if this is going to take anything beyond that or extend the authority. That question was never answered.

In closing, maybe the minister can answer that and give some assurances to the Assembly and particularly to the public on how this would look. Would it be any different than some of the agreements we have in place today across our great country? This is huge in that sense.

There are some other issues that we have, that we argued, that we brought motions forward on, but in the end I think the positives of this bill certainly overrode the negatives. This is a good step in the right direction on becoming efficient and managing our traffic system.

With that, I'm going to support the bill. I'm asking the rest of my caucus to support this bill that this government has brought forward. In the summary speech that the minister will give maybe he'll even answer some of the questions that I've just posed.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there other speakers? If not, I'll invite the minister to close debate if he so desires.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will close debate. I'll just give a couple of short words. I know that the member from Rocky

Mountain House – I probably haven't got the name of the riding right. My apologies to the hon. member. But the hon. member that just spoke raised a couple of issues.

HOV lanes, of course, around Fort McMurray, the hon. member might know, might not, are actually something that have been requested by Wood Buffalo and the industry up there largely to help with the high traffic flow and the bumper-to-bumper traffic between the municipality and the areas of the oil sands and the workplaces outside of there. They're public highways, so they can't truly be called single-purpose highways. The fact is that the population base in Fort McMurray and the work areas are two of the only major stops on the highway. While that doesn't make them single-purpose highways, it makes them used a lot like single-purpose highways would be, and both the people from industry and the people from the municipality have suggested that if they could get greater use out of the infrastructure that's there, perhaps including the shoulders, of course, after first making sure that the shoulders are wide enough and safe enough to do that, if the shoulder was used as a bus lane, it might actually decrease the congestion and help things out there while being fiscally responsible. We hope to make that work, and we'll look for other opportunities, as the hon. member said before, only where they might be appropriate in the rest of the province.

Mr. Speaker, on reasonable and probable, although the hon. member that just spoke may be quite learned, unfortunately, I'm going to choose to side with the Supreme Court of Canada in the court's *Baron versus Canada*, 1993, part of which reads:

The argument was rejected . . .

“Rejected” is the key word.

. . . that the “reasonable grounds” standard in s. 231.3(3) is constitutionally insufficient as being a lower standard than “reasonable and probable grounds.”

Now, as the hon. member said, who knows what future court cases will bring, but at this point, Mr. Speaker, I think that the government is going to side with the Supreme Court of Canada over the hon. member while acknowledging the hon. member's deep knowledge in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for their consideration, and I respectfully ask the House to support this bill. I will, with that, close debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a third time]

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, since it's almost 6 o'clock, I would move to adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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