



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 2, 2013

Issue 76

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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

### Party standings:

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

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

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

Chair: Mr. Khan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Eggen
Anderson	Kubinec
Casey	Sherman
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### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Brown	Leskiw
Cusanelli	Notley
DeLong	Pedersen
Fritz	Swann
Goudreau	Towle
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Jeneroux	Xiao
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### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Fritz	Sherman
Kennedy-Glans	Smith
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### Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Barnes	Jablonski
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Brown	Notley
Cusanelli	Olesen
DeLong	Rowe
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Fritz	Swann

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Cao	Notley
Casey	Pedersen
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Kennedy-Glans	Saskiw
Kubinec	Towle
Luan	Young

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Anderson  
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Anglin	Luan
Bilous	Pastoor
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Hale	Sarich
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Barnes	Johnson, L.
Bikman	Khan
Bilous	Kubinec
Blakeman	Lemke
Calahasen	Sandhu
Casey	Stier
Fenske	Webber

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 2, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us pray. Dear Lord, we pray that You will always be with us and with those we love as well as with those whom we serve. Amen.

Hon. members, please remain standing and join in the singing of our national anthem since this is the beginning of our new week. Today's anthem will be led by Ms Kyla Rodgers.

#### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Hon members, it may benefit you to know that Ms Kyla Rodgers is a former head page and tour guide of our Legislative Assembly. She's also a member of the University of Alberta Mixed Chorus and Concordia University College of Alberta concert choirs. She also possesses a grade 10 certificate from The Royal Conservatory of Music. Still others would recognize her as working with the Sergeant-at-Arms. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Kie-Cheon Lee, who is the consul general of Korea. Accompanying him is Yoon Sun Eo, consul of Korea. They are, of course, up in the Speaker's gallery. Alberta and Korea have a long-standing trade investment and cultural relationship. In fact, this year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between our province and Korea. In addition, next year will be the 40th anniversary of Alberta's twinning with Gangwon. There are more than 12,000 people of Korean descent who have made Alberta their home and helped make Alberta the most prosperous province in Canada. Korea is Alberta's fifth-largest export market. Our two jurisdictions continue to build strong ties in everything from trade to cross-cultural endeavours. I would like to ask Consul General Lee and Consul Eo to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Let us begin with school groups, starting with Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you 35

students from Bisset elementary school, located in Edmonton-Mill Creek. These students are participating in our School at the Legislature program this week. They are accompanied by their teacher, Robin Kinasevich, and three parent helpers: Wayne Portice, Jason Scollon, and LoveLeen Kahlon. At this time I'd ask all of my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms Olesen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise before you and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 93 reinforcements from St. Theresa Catholic school, whose students were here last week as well. It is great to have them here to take in the proceedings, and I hope they have enjoyed their time with us today. I would like to introduce the leaders with them: Ms Stefanie Kaiser, Mrs. Lynne Schurek, Mr. Kurt Davison, Mrs. Clelland, Ms Tiffany Kryzalka, Ms Nicole Anderson, and Ms Norma Aanhout. If they would all please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome.

Thanks for being here.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Deputy Premier, I understand your guests have not yet arrived, so let's move on to the Associate Minister of Wellness, followed by the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to introduce Gordon Hensel, registrar of the Alberta College of Optometrists. Dr. Hensel is seated in the members' gallery and is here to support the tabling of the Alberta College of Optometrists annual report to government, which I will table later this afternoon. Members, please join me in welcoming him to this Assembly and thanking his organization for all of their dedication and hard work to advance the optometry profession here in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Roy Krahn, who's sitting in the members' gallery. Roy and his wife, Darlene, are very dedicated volunteers in the community of McKenzie Towne in Calgary-Hays. They have been volunteering at the McKenzie Towne Retirement Residence for 11 years and in that time have spent countless Monday nights serving seniors with nondenominational church services. I am pleased to introduce Mr. Krahn today and ask that he receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guest, my constituent Denise Baillie. Denise is the new president of CCSVI, chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, Alberta. You saw her in front of the Legislature last fall and this spring demonstrating for CCSVI treatment to be made available in Alberta. She wants members of this House to know that after her treatment in California on May 1 she cancelled her government disability funding, has returned to work full-time, and is doing things she always wanted to do like taking dance lessons. I would

now ask Denise to rise and perhaps dance a little and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, your first of two introductions, followed by Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Mr. Speaker, my guests will be here after 2 o'clock.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Edmonton-Decore, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly four representatives from Chateau at Schonsee Square, an affordable housing opportunity for low-income seniors and people with disabilities in Edmonton-Decore. Chateau at Schonsee Square opened on September 30, 2013. It illustrates a partnership between the private sector, federal government, and our government, who invested \$6 million to achieve over a hundred affordable housing suites. My guests are seated in the members' gallery. I extend congratulations and thanks to them, and I would ask them to please rise as I mention their names: Mr. Jarret Sheath, vice-president of business development for Lifestyle Options Holdings; Mr. Dan Slaven, director for Lifestyle Options Holdings; Ms Renae Ferchoff, director for Chateau Schonsee Developments; and Mr. Cam Ferchoff, director for Chateau Schonsee Developments. I would now ask the Assembly to join yours truly to provide my guests with the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Cassie and Lyle Liska. Cassie's mother was Violet MacDonald, a senior who had a tragic experience in seniors' care and has since passed away. Both Cassie and Lyle are here because they are concerned with our system, that fails our seniors. I would ask them to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

1:40

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Calgary-East.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly guests that have joined us today in the public gallery to show their support for Bill 211, that I'll be introducing later in this House. My guests today represent some of the largest Mandarin-speaking associations in Calgary, and they also represent some of the heritage language schools there. Because of weather conditions, some were not able to make it here, but for those brave souls who made it, as I call your name, I would ask you to stand to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House: Mr. James Zhan, president of the Qinghua association of Calgary; Ms Wei Huang, CEO of Calgary Ringtorch Sport Association; and Mr. Jilin Wang, president of Calgary Dongbei association. I would now ask all of my colleagues to give them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests that have joined us today in the public gallery to show their support for Bill 211. They are here to show support, also, for heritage language schools in Alberta. All of my guests are from Changing Together, which is a place for immigrant women to meet and work together in solving challenges they face and to help them to participate fully in Canadian life. I would ask that each of the guests rise as their name is called: Leticia Cables, Cleo Palma, Lois Binas, Chandra Weerasinghe, Vida Drah, and Jasmine Phan. I would ask all members to give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. They have yet to arrive.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Assembly Ms Corrine Gowers, a provincial co-ordinator with WORKink Alberta. She has worked with persons with disabilities for over 20 years. Ms Gowers works to build awareness and community supports for individuals and employers. She's a strong advocate for training skills and the abilities of individuals with disabilities. Ms Gowers is here today to raise awareness for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3, 2013. I would ask that the Assembly greet her with the traditional warm greeting.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

## Persons with Disabilities

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, 15 per cent of the world's population lives with some form of disability. In 2006 the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities was adopted by the United Nations to ensure that full equality and participation for persons with disabilities was achieved in our society. This year's theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which will be recognized on December 3, is Break Barriers, Open Doors: For an Inclusive Society and Development for All.

On September 23 the high-level meeting on development and disabilities was convened by the general assembly of the UN, and an action-oriented document was created to provide policy guidance to translate the initial commitment for a disability-inclusive society into action and to ensure accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Around the world persons with disabilities face physical, social, economic, and attitudinal barriers that exclude them from participating fully and effectively as equal members of society. They often lack equal access to basic resources such as education, employment, health care, and social and legal support systems.

The commemoration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities in 2013, which includes activities in the communities of Fort Saskatchewan and Vegreville, in my constituency, provides an

opportunity for us to address exclusion by focusing on promoting accessibility and by removing all types of barriers in society, thus ensuring the integration of persons with disabilities in political, social, economic, and cultural life, and that should and must be our goal, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Seniors' Long-term Care

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For Cassie Liska out of Red Deer the past six years have been the most difficult years of her life. In the spring of 2007 her family faced the reality of putting their 66-year-old mum, Violet MacDonald, suffering from MS, into a care facility. As any loving family would, they asked questions, seeking the best quality of care that their mother could receive. Often their questions went unanswered. Their genuine concern for their mother's well-being was ignored. For Cassie there were many days where she felt helpless.

It was not uncommon for Cassie to see her mum left for days on end in a wheelchair, never being put into a bed, and lucky to be bathed once a month. As her caregiver Cassie was left wondering how to advocate on behalf of her mum when at every turn she was ignored.

In February of this year Violet was hospitalized due to complications from severe bed wounds which became septic days after being left in her own diaper for over 36 hours. She was taken from McKenzie Towne Centre to the Rockyview hospital, where she endured four months of treatment. The transition department told Cassie that if the family refused to send her mum back to McKenzie Towne, they could not guarantee where Violet would be placed in a care facility in Alberta. Due to the fear of the unknown and the family's need to be close to their mum, they felt there was no choice but to return to the same facility that was subject to a Protection for Persons in Care investigation, which ultimately found the abuse allegations to be true.

This is a sad state of seniors' care in the most prosperous province in Canada. After all of this, Violet was told that she would be bedridden, taking what limited mobility she had left away from her. Violet took her last breath on October 27, 2013.

Dignity and respect: that is what each and every one of us deserves in this world. We would not accept this type of care for our children. Why would we want any of this type of care for our seniors? Violet couldn't even get the required care she needed to survive, her family alone in a system full of bureaucracy and a cover-your-butt mentality.

Let's be clear. Violet's story is not a one-off. These same stories are happening each and every day. We have an opportunity to ensure changes are made so that no one – no one, Mr. Speaker – has to endure what Cassie, her family, and her mother, Violet, have had to go through.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### University of Alberta Health Sciences Partnerships

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today in order to highlight a matter of great importance for the future of health, education, and research in Alberta and, for those who know me, something that I'm personally and intimately passionate about. I'm talking about our medical students and the

value we should place as a province on our ability to train them and retain their services. The University of Alberta's medical school, for instance, is host to some of the most talented medical personnel in the world and is renowned for producing some of the most groundbreaking research in the field of medicine.

The Edmonton Clinic Health Academy is a fine example of new advancement and innovation efforts coming out of medical educational practice in Alberta. The Edmonton Clinic Health Academy is one of two facilities that together represent a partnership between Alberta Health Services, the University of Alberta, and the government of Alberta, and it is designed to change how we deliver outpatient care as well as health sciences education and research.

This facility is home to a community of researchers, educators, and students who collaborate in a multidisciplinary environment. The academy is student focused, offering a new generation of learners the specialized space and simulations technology that will prepare them for the requirements of the 21st century, patient-centred and team-based health care.

The Kaye Edmonton Clinic, which is housed in the same building complex as the academy, is also unique to Alberta and provides co-ordinated diagnostic and specialist ambulatory services in a fully integrated facility. Patients here benefit from seamless outpatient care and streamlined access to specialized services. It gives students an opportunity to connect to real-life practices and learn from real experience. It also lends an opportunity for Alberta's medical students to gain wisdom in another critical aspect of their future professions. It places them with their patients and their families, and it's here that they become doctors and citizen leaders because it is here that they acquire that rare wisdom that can only be gained through direct contact with the intimacies of the human heart.

Positive outcomes like those in the Edmonton Clinic Health Academy and the Kaye Edmonton Clinic should make it clear why it is so important to continue to attract doctors and medical students to Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us begin with the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. The first main set of questions.

### Seniors' Long-term Care

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the heartbreaking and horrifying story of Violet MacDonald's death paints a grim picture for other families whose loved ones are in long-term care. When Violet arrived at hospital, supposedly for treatment of a urinary tract infection, hospital staff were appalled to discover putrefying wounds on her feet, lower back, and buttocks. These wounds were clearly the result of improper care. Can the minister explain why a review is not automatically initiated when a patient in long-term care arrives in hospital with unreported gaping wounds?

1:50

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very tragic situation, and the first thing I want to do is express the sympathy of our government to the members of this resident's family and our condolences at the news of her death.

Mr. Speaker, I am gathering as much information as I can today, but what I can tell you clearly is that this sort of situation is unacceptable in this province in any circumstance. I have asked the Alberta Health Services on-site team to monitor operations at

this facility until my questions are answered. We'll be taking some additional . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. leader, your first supplemental.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the family appreciates hearing that.

Despite all of the supposed safeguards and checks the government claims are in place to protect seniors, none were able to help Violet. The subsequent investigation into her wounds had to be initiated at the family's request. It produced precisely one recommendation, that the long-term care facility change its wound management policy. No further accountability and no consequence for Violet's neglect and death. Does this government really believe that its review process is adequate?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the House is that every investigation that is conducted under the Protection for Persons in Care Act produces a report. All of the recommendations in those reports are followed up directly by Alberta Health Services and my department so we can ensure that the appropriate corrective steps are taken. In this case media reports have suggested that there were issues around refusal to receive care. Those are some of the questions that I want to have answered. Absolutely, in this case the system has failed this resident, and we will do our best to find out why.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I think the public is alarmed at the government's record of protecting seniors in long-term care. The minister speaks of this particular investigation, which only produced one recommendation. In fact, the investigation of Violet's wounds was superficial and seemed to be more about covering off legal concerns than protecting Violet. Protections for Alberta seniors are clearly inadequate. Will the Premier commit that the new seniors' advocate will be fully independent so that they can properly and fully investigate cases like this?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the point in these lines of questioning, where the hon. member begins to attempt to draw generalizations based on, in this case, a very tragic incident. What I can tell you is that Alberta Health Services is on-site today. They are monitoring the care being delivered in the facility. I have asked the Health Quality Council of Alberta to expand their review of the quality assurance system for home care and to extend that review to continuing care facilities across the province as well.

Mr. Speaker, the answer is that we can never do enough to assure quality in our health care system, whether we're talking about continuing care or acute . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. leader, your second main set of questions.

### Disaster Recovery Program

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, last summer's floods were truly devastating, but for many families the chaos and the red tape of the disaster recovery program have added tremendous insult to their considerable injury. It is now more than five months since the flood. More than 9,500 Albertans have applied for disaster assistance. The government constantly reminds us that the flood will cost billions, yet there is only \$25 million in disaster assistance funding that has actually flowed through to Albertans who have had their homes and businesses destroyed. Why?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, as we said when this first happened, there is no doubt that as we move through this terrible disaster, there are many complicated circumstances to deal with. You will know that the deadline for applying for the DRP was last week, and therefore we know now how many people want to work with the government to ensure that we support them as best we possibly can. I think a lot of people who are involved in this and have friends involved know that there are insurance claims to be dealt with, that there are business reports that need to be done. We've always said that we will not get through this quickly, but we will get through it.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I have correspondence between one of my constituents and LandLink, the company that has the sole-source contract to mismanage the disaster recovery program. LandLink has asked these homeowners for the same document three times. Three times this document has been sent in, and it has actually been lost three times. One of the letters from the DRP says that the homeowners won't receive their next DRP payment if they don't send in the document, but they haven't even received their first DRP payment. Can the Premier explain what on earth is going on with this program?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the member is right. The \$25 million has flowed out because we have been working very closely with families from all 30 communities who are impacted by the flood. There is no doubt that this has had severe impacts on many families. Some of them are taking time to make decisions, but the funds from DRP are flowing as fast as members need it. For a particular circumstance, I've always asked – and we've always offered, including the associate minister for High River – for any information about any particular cases that may be a challenge, and we address them as quickly as we can because we're here to serve every single Albertan who was impacted by this flood.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the funds are clearly not flowing out as needed.

This government bragged early in the flooding that people would receive \$10,000 initial payments in August. Hardly anyone did. So far only 40 per cent of applicants have received any DRP money at all. The average payment so far is \$6,300. We all saw the damage that the flood did. Sixty-three hundred dollars per application doesn't cut it. Sixty per cent of applicants not having received a penny doesn't cut it. What will the Premier do to fix this mess?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, we have an amazing team set up with Municipal Affairs and managing the DRP program, that has been helping every single Albertan in all those 30 communities impacted by the flood. You cannot measure the success of the program by the average cheque that's made because some people had very minimal damage and didn't need large cheques. Some people have received much more than the average the member across the way quotes. We will continue day to day to serve every single Albertan impacted by this flood, just the way we have for the last six months, successfully.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader. Third main set of questions.

**Ms Smith:** The Premier promised \$10,000 initial payments within seven to 14 days of application. It hasn't happened.



### Public-service Contract Negotiations

**Ms Smith:** Albertans have been blindsided by the government's new heavy-handed approach to public-sector contract negotiations, and I use that term loosely. Since the days of Peter Lougheed, if negotiations with unions didn't result in a deal, unions could go to arbitration to get a deal done. It was the cornerstone of Alberta's public-sector labour negotiations. Today that cornerstone is under attack. This government wants to terminate the legal right to arbitration to force a deal. To the Premier: why is she taking this dangerous step in labour relations if . . .

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

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a little rich coming from a party whose platform suggests that they're going to wipe away all of the rights for negotiations and zero salaries.

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

**Mr. Horner:** I knew that was coming, Mr. Speaker.

We made a commitment to Albertans that we would live within our means. We were very up front with all of our negotiating groups. The doctors and teachers worked very well with us. This legislation, which will be debated in this House over the course of this afternoon and tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, is about getting a fair deal for our employees and a fair deal for the taxpayers of Alberta.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, this move carries with it serious implications for future labour negotiations. By attacking the legal rights of unions in this way, the Premier is only deepening the rift between the government and its workers, and it's driving that crucial relationship right off the rails. To the Premier: doesn't she understand that treating public-sector unions with respect is the key to healthy negotiations, a motivated workforce, and ultimately a better deal for taxpayers?

**Ms Redford:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that's a bit rich coming from this Leader of the Opposition, who doesn't actually believe that unions should exist in the public sector or the private sector.

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

**Ms Redford:** However, I will tell you that this is a government that is absolutely committed to dealing with our front-line public-sector workers with respect, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that as we move forward, we have robust labour relations in this province. We have to ensure that we get a deal that is fair for both Alberta taxpayers and Alberta union members, and we'll continue to do that.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier and her party didn't campaign on wage freezes and union busting. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Public-sector workers were told that this Premier was going to be their champion. She promised them everything in the 2012 election. However, in what has become the hallmark of her leadership, what she is doing today is drastically different than what she promised. This pattern of promising the world and then reneging now threatens the stability of public services in Alberta. To the Premier: why won't she just keep her word on anything?

2:00

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Let's bring something into perspective. The Wildrose opposition clearly, clearly campaigned on freezing public-sector wages. [interjections] They clearly campaigned on

freezing public-sector wages until some deficit is eliminated. Now they're talking about binding arbitration, but they also want to live within their own means. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that what they're saying doesn't make any sense. [interjections] We are focused on making sure that our public-sector employees are remunerated properly just like teachers, just like doctors, and we have time until January 31 to reach that agreement.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the disruptions really are not very parliamentary, so let's not have any more of them today, or I shall have to interject.

A point of order from Airdrie was noted at 1:58, and a second point of order by Airdrie at 1:59. We'll look into those later.

Let's go on to the leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's time to hit this government right from the centre. Premier Lougheed took away the right of government employees to go on strike; however, he recognized that in the interest of fairness, the loss of the ability to go on strike had to be replaced with the option of going to binding arbitration. The very people who support the government with their work – nurses, teachers, support staff, legislative staff, and security, and many others, including those great Albertans who rescued many in the floods – depend on arbitration to achieve a fair contract. To the Premier: why do you and your Conservative government insist on attacking the very people that keep this province . . .

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

**Ms Redford:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we're going to have the opportunity to discuss this legislation in the Legislature. [interjections] Let's be clear that what this legislation does is that it encourages AUPE to come back to the bargaining table so that we can get the best possible deal for public servants and for Alberta taxpayers. [interjections] We will continue to ask AUPE to come back to the bargaining table so that we can continue to bargain.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Centre and others, please. The interjections are really not called for; you know that.

**Ms Blakeman:** It's an honest exchange.

**The Speaker:** I know. But then you provoke this side, and this side gets at that side, and then we have a little bit of confusion, and then I have to stand up here and take up your valuable time. All it does is that it shortens the speaking time.

So let's get on with your first supplemental, hon. leader.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my hand is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, brought in by a Liberal government. Two of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed to us in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are the freedom of expression and freedom of association. To the Premier, a very simple question here: in your former life you fought for the rights and freedoms of others across the world, so in your current life why are you attacking the rights and the freedoms of the very people you were elected to serve?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned a number of times, the bills that these hon. members are talking about will be up for debate tonight. [interjection] Let it be perfectly clear, we would not bring forward any bill that we do not believe to be constitutional, and we do not believe that we are attacking fundamental

rights. [interjection] We believe that what we're doing is protecting the rights of Alberta taxpayers in line with the budget that was brought forward and the constraints that we said we'd put in place. We are also ensuring, in another bill quite separate and apart from that, that illegal acts are sanctioned with appropriate sanctions.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Centre, I'd be happy to add you to the list, if you wish, at the appropriate space. Please, respect your leader's question, and respect the answer even if you don't like it.

The hon. leader. Second supplemental.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that the Premier is absolutely speechless in her quest to go against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Never seen that before.

Earlier this year guards at the new remand centre in Edmonton went on a wildcat strike in desperation because their complaints of unsafe working conditions were repeatedly ignored by this Conservative government. I spoke out in support of them, as did many journalists, bloggers, and others. To the Premier. Let me just ask you a simple question again. Could average Albertans, the media, the bloggers, say even elected officials be fined for speaking out or writing in . . .

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, let's be perfectly clear. This bill is dealing with illegal – “wildcat” is a code word for illegal activity. This member will have the opportunity to debate. There is nothing in this bill that hampers any legal strikes or protests or manifestations. The member knows that very well. Relevant to our guards if there are bona fide safety issues, we have always been very clear: file an occupational health and safety complaint, and every complaint will be investigated.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week this government introduced draconian legislation in bills 45 and 46 that have taken away basic, fundamental human rights for thousands and thousands of workers across this province. But it was only a few months ago, during the devastating floods, that this Premier said that these same workers who helped save many lives are, I quote, heroes. Yet this Tea Party government thanks these heroes by reducing their standard of living and legislating punitive measures that effectively destroy their freedom of association and freedom of speech. How is it good public policy, Premier, to reward the excellent work of your own employees . . .

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** It would be good to be able for once to deal with facts. You know, Mr. Speaker, very well that there is nothing in these bills that in any way limits the right of association. As a matter of fact, these bills will allow AUPE and the employer, in this case this government, to negotiate in good faith an agreement that we have reached with teachers and doctors and that we have with many others. What this member is talking about is definitely not reflective of the legislation before this House.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government fairly drips with hypocrisy. To suggest that passing legislation that forces a deal is negotiating in good faith is

ridiculous, absurd, and insulting to the intelligence of every member of this House. Why won't this Tea Party government stop this shameful attack on middle-class families and instead roll back some of the generous tax cuts that this government has given to wealthy Albertans and corporations?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the idea here is to come to a negotiated settlement, and that's exactly what we're working to do. We have indeed put an offer on the table that is, in fact, more than what is in the legislation which we will be debating in this House. We hope that the AUPE will come back to the table so that we can come to a negotiated, fair deal for our employees and a fair deal for taxpayers. The government is working to balance both sides' interests.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government's hypocrisy knows no end. To suggest that this is a negotiation is ridiculous. As far as this government is concerned, black is white, up is down, cold is hot. You know, the meanings of words are completely turned on their heads when these ministers get up and speak.

Why won't this government stop their attack on public-sector workers before they waste millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on an unnecessary and costly legal fight over this unconstitutional bill?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, the facts are very clear. This government wants to negotiate with AUPE. We have asked that they come back to the table and negotiate in good faith until January 31. We ran on a campaign in the last election that we will live within our means, but at the same time, unlike the opposition, we will treat our employees fairly, and we will not simply just freeze their wages. We have reached a deal with teachers, we have reached a deal with doctors, and there is no reason to believe that we won't reach a deal with AUPE.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

No more preambles to your supplementals, please, from this point on, starting with Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

#### **Seniors' Long-term Care** *(continued)*

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cassie Liska's mother, Violet, sat for days in a wheelchair and was lucky to be bathed once a month. She had wounds on her feet and buttocks that became so bad it resulted in hospitalization. The family was forced to file a protection for persons in care complaint, which found this facility was failing to follow regulations and was complicit in abuse. To the minister: why does this continue to happen?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, while the circumstances of this particular resident are indeed tragic, I would be doing workers and families across the province a great disservice if I did not reject the notion that this is, in fact, commonplace in our continuing care system. We deliver care of the highest quality to thousands of Albertans every day. We work collaboratively with their families and with front-line staff to make sure that the services people need are available to them, but there are occasions where circumstances arise where the conduct is not in keeping with what we expect. That's what we're . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, first supplemental.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, I would think once is enough.

Given that the protection for persons in care complaint found evidence of abuse and was not able to make a single meaningful recommendation after seven full months, will you commit today to make the seniors' advocate independent to give seniors across Alberta a true voice?

2:10

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the issue here is not the question of the voice for any one constituent in this in particular. The issue is how we establish and maintain and monitor quality standards throughout our health care system, in particular when they affect people who are most vulnerable. As I've said, I've expanded the Health Quality Council of Alberta review to encompass how AHS manages for quality with contracted service providers in continuing care. We will be expanding the role of the Department of Health in the monitoring of quality standards, and as with every other Protection for Persons in Care Act investigation the recommendations from this one . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, second supplemental.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would never accept this type of treatment for our kids in provincial care, which has an established independent advocate on their behalf. Minister, on behalf of all seniors in Alberta can you please make the seniors' advocate an independent body of this Legislature?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to agree, as would all of my colleagues, that the situation that the hon. member describes should never happen in Alberta, but the focus that we need to have is one on quality. Attempts to establish independent advocates, attempts to politicize these situations do not help. What helps is ensuring on an ongoing basis that the very strong quality standards that are in place in this province are adhered to in every circumstance and that where they are not, there is appropriate follow-up.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Airdrie.

#### Winter Road Maintenance

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My family has lived by and travelled on highway 2 for more than 40 years, and I have never seen a spate of accidents as over the last few months. The highway 2 corridor between Calgary and Edmonton is the economic lifeline of Alberta, with more than 80,000 vehicle movements per day. My constituents as well as many Albertans are very worried for their safety driving this highway in the winter due to the poor condition. To the Minister of Transportation: why this poor state of maintenance?

**Mr. McIver:** I thank the hon. member for being such a strong advocate for the people of his riding, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I drove that road just this morning, and I have to say that while I never felt unsafe, the trip took four hours instead of three. The fact is that we cannot stop winter from being winter. Nonetheless, when storms come, we get equipment out. We monitor it. At the end of the day we have people out, we have GPS, and we know of every piece of equipment, where they're out. The job is getting done. I can tell the hon. member isn't . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, first supplemental.

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these roads are supposed to be maintained to Alberta government standards and there have been many instances lately of poor conditions even days after snowfall, to the minister: do you have the ability to penalize the highway maintenance contractors for poor performance?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I will say this. Not only do we have the ability to penalize contractors, we do it. They're held to a high standard. After every storm we review the storm with the contractors where the service was not up to the standards that Albertans could and should expect. They are penalized, real financial penalties, up to the point where they can actually lose the long-term contract that they have and put a lot of money in to set up. We take this seriously. The contractors will tell you they don't like it very much when they get those penalties, but we don't hesitate to put the penalties in place when the service requires it.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that provincial highways are public, taxpayer-funded assets yet they're being maintained by the private sector for private gain, again to the minister: don't you think this poor highway maintenance situation is calling for your department to take over this vital service delivery to ensure the safety of all Albertans?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the taxpayers of Alberta, through this government, have saved lots of money, in the neighbourhood of 25 per cent, since we gave up our ability to do it and have contracted it out to the private sector. Further, over time the level of service has increased. I know the member is not happy today, but the fact is that over time it's gotten better. We have systems in place to deal with situations that crop up. The roads in this province get taken care of very well. We will continue to respond to the complaints as they come up, but we can't stop it from being . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

#### Public-service Contract Negotiations

*(continued)*

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans obviously want the government to balance the budget. That means prioritizing and cutting wasteful spending, and there is a lot of waste. It also means bargaining in good faith with our public-sector workers to arrive at a fair deal for both them and the taxpayer. In 1977 Premier Lougheed provided our public employees, who provide critical services for all Albertans, the right to binding arbitration as an alternative to the right to strike. To the minister: why have you introduced legislation scrapping the arbitration rights of our front-line workers?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a little bit rich coming from the party opposite, who talked about holding the line on front-line public-sector salaries; in other words, freezing them. They'd have to put in the same legislation, actually, but much broader in reach. [interjections]

He talks about getting a bargained solution, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we're after. We want the AUPE to come back to the table to negotiate with us so that we can come to a fair and equitable resolution.

**Mr. Anderson:** Negotiation can't be done at gunpoint, Minister.

Given that during the 1977 debate in this House on granting our public-sector employees arbitration rights, well-respected minister Merv Leitch said, "If they are not to have the right to strike, in fairness to them we must provide . . . the fairest possible labor relations system for the employees of Alberta short of providing them with the right to withdraw services or strike." Very good point. Minister Merv Leitch and Premier Lougheed had it right. Arbitration rights rather than strikes on the front lines. Why are you messing this up, Minister?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, there's also the right of the taxpayer to have a settlement that balances what we know to be living within our means and fair and equitable payment. We are not freezing salaries at zero in this legislation, nor do we want to do that in the negotiation. [interjections] In fact, as I said earlier, we've got an offer on the table that's beyond what is in the legislation. We're open to the AUPE coming back to the table to negotiate. That's what we're after, a fair deal for the taxpayers and a fair deal for the employees.

**Mr. Anderson:** Given that before the election you, the Premier, your MLAs, and your paid operatives ran around the province promising large pay increases, promising support for the collective bargaining process, more support for front-line staff, a balanced budget, no debt, a free pony for every single voter and every single household, do you understand why Albertans have completely lost trust? How can they ever, ever trust anything that you say again, Minister?

**Mr. Horner:** You know, again, Mr. Speaker, it's a little bit rich coming from a party who totally reinvented themselves after the election, changed all of their core-held values at one policy conference, and came out trying to look like Progressive Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, the honest truth here for the hon. member is that we are wanting to get . . . [interjections] I hope they'd like to hear the answer. We are hoping to get a balance between the rights of the taxpayers and the rights of our employees, whom we value deeply and to whom we want to provide competitive compensation that is amongst the best in the nation.

**The Speaker:** Interjection after interjection after interjection. I had trouble hearing what you were saying, hon. Minister of Finance, and I'd like you to repeat it all again, but we don't have time.

So let's move on to Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

#### Oil and Gas Drilling Applications

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been a concern from the industry about the backlog of applications to the Alberta Energy Regulator. To the Minister of Energy: are those concerns grounded in fact and warranted?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we all know that the winter drilling season is an important time of the year for the energy industry and that it varies from year to year. What we're seeing is a real step up in the number of applications this year. This is a good sign. There's a lot of good work going on in Alberta. The regulator is responding and triaging applications as

they're coming in and making sure that people who are ready to go out and do their work on the frozen land to develop the resources of this province, to create wealth for Albertans are able to do so.

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

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what has been done to address those atrocious delays?

**Mr. Hughes:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been some delays. But, actually, there's also been a lot of good work. The industry, the ESRD folks and the Alberta Energy folks and the aboriginal consultation office have all worked together to help ensure that any applications that are needed for immediate action or are critically important to the winter drilling season are dealt with expeditiously and are addressed. So I would say that the challenge of meeting the needs and serving the regulatory needs of Albertans are being well looked after.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, second supplemental.

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again. Is this the last of the changes, or will there be more? Can we expect any more issues moving forward?

**Mr. Hughes:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, we're partway through the creation of a whole new energy regulator in Alberta, that will be effective, efficient, and will help ensure that we address all challenges for the energy industry without for one moment compromising the environmental standards that Albertans hold dear. I can tell you that if any industry players feel they have a concern, I'd encourage them to call the office of the CEO of the Alberta Energy Regulator to help ensure that they're dealt with on an expeditious basis.

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

#### Alberta Health Services Quarterly Reports

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health Services continues to miss their own health benchmarks from 2010, including their first and second quarterly reports: 92 days late today. This cannot of course be blamed on the dedicated front-line professionals, labouring to make this unwieldy system work. The government hides the reality that hospitals are dangerously over capacity, there are life-threatening delays in EMS response times, and there's a failure to achieve eight-hour ER admission targets. To the minister: for three years you failed on your own benchmarks, eight-hour emergency in particular . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister for a response.

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there's a question there somewhere. As I've said in response to previous questions, we are developing a new performance management framework for the health care system. This is a joint effort on the part of Alberta Health Services in conjunction with their front-line providers as well as the Department of Health. We are actually, as I've said in response to previous questions, exceeding national benchmarks in areas such as hip and knee surgeries, and at the same time we are serving growing numbers of Albertans, the highest growth rate in the country.

**Dr. Swann:** So why are you not producing the second quarterly report, and why are you not engaging front-line professionals, experts, in setting these benchmarks, like Dr. Paul Parks?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said in response to previous questions, we are developing a new performance measurement framework for the health system, one that looks at the performance of the health care system from the perspective of the patient, not the opposition, not others who would seek to politicize health care issues. When that performance measurement framework is ready, we will release it along with results since the last quarterly report.

**Dr. Swann:** A simple question, Mr. Speaker. When can we expect the first and the second quarterly health reports?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, that question was asked and answered.

As to the hon. member's request in his previous question, his reference to working with front-line providers, he knows full well that we are, Mr. Speaker, that the focus of the health care system is to provide front-line people with the tools and the support that they need in order to deliver the quality of care that they expect for patients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Seniors' Long-term Care** (continued)

**Mr. Eggen:** This weekend Albertans learned of a horrific case of abuse in a private seniors' facility. A woman suffering from severe bed sores was left without proper care and developed life-threatening infections. Alberta seniors will continue to suffer this sort of abuse and more often until this PC government takes real action to solve the crisis in long-term care by legislating staff-patient ratios and delivering services publicly, which report after report and good old common sense show is the best way. To the minister: what's the point of your seniors' advocate if the office is not independent and the system is thoroughly . . .

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

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing that we know will not work is focusing this debate on ideology, particularly that most deeply held by this hon. member and others who have stood up time after time to talk about quality issues in the context of their personal beliefs. What will allow us to continue to improve the very high level of care that's already provided in the province is a focus on quality, a focus on measuring and monitoring, adherence to quality standards, improving those standards as we go forward, and supporting front-line workers to deliver on that quality.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, it's interesting on standards because the president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions said this morning that Alberta has the lowest amount of nursing care in our long-term care facilities of anywhere in Canada. Given that the recent report from the Parkland Institute shows as well that residents in private facilities on average get an hour less of care, will the minister admit that his government's obsession with private care, which is ideological anyway, is shortchanging our seniors, endangering their health, and depriving them of the dignity that they deserve?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta are indeed fortunate that this hon. member is not making decisions about how to meet the growing needs of Albertans with respect to seniors'

care and with respect to health care generally. This is a province that's growing by the size of the city of Red Deer a year. The answer to this is to support front-line workers with the tools and the resources that they need in order to do their job. Ideology has no place in this debate.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know that the Alberta NDP has tabled thousands of working short forms of long-term care staff showing that residents were left in bed, missing baths, and weren't responded to in a timely manner because of inadequate staffing from this PC government. Given that caring for our seniors really should be the first priority, I would say and most Albertans would say: will this minister please commit to legislating staff ratios for long-term care in this province to ensure that our seniors receive the care that they deserve and not just empty words?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, what this government will commit to and what we have continued to deliver on is to provide Albertans with access to the services that they need. That's based on a personal assessment, a professional assessment of the resident's needs and the patient's needs. It is not based on legislated ratios. It is not based on ideology. It is not based on anything other than a focus on patients and families in communities. That's what building Alberta is all about, and that's what we're doing.

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

#### **Deaths of Children in Care**

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are still reeling from last week's revelations about our child welfare system. The Minister of Human Services has since claimed that exposing details about children dying in care is somehow part of an agenda or that the information has been selectively chosen. But the fact remains that since 1999 one hundred and forty-five children have died in care, 89 deaths were kept secret, and publication bans shroud the system in secrecy. To the minister: what is your ministry doing in advance of the MLA round-table to ensure we take a co-ordinated approach to reviewing all child deaths?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think that when one focuses on 86 deaths unreported prior to 2011 – all deaths now being reported – when there are some 8,000 to 9,000 children in care in any given year, that would be a rather narrow part of the agenda. There are a lot of other issues to be addressed and other things happening. There are a lot of very good things happening in the system as a result of many of those investigations that have happened over the years and the recommendations over the years. The round-table will determine whether we have the right death investigation process, one of its agenda items, and we will take . . .

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Shaw, first supplemental.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one-third of the babies who died in care succumbed to SIDS or to entirely preventable unsafe sleeping conditions, how does the minister propose to address this issue before your round-table?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, some time ago there were recommendations around this. There's been a complete review. In fact, a review was done of infant deaths to SIDS in 2005 and recommendations that we implement safe sleeping policies. We've developed the safe babies training for foster parents and

kinship caregivers of infants. The safe babies training provides valuable information about caring for infants and specialized care required by babies prenatally. It includes a chapter on sleep positions, reducing risk. So we've learned from what's happened, we've learned from the reviews, we've learned from the recommendations, and we have implemented changes, and those are . . .

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

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the culture of secrecy has led to mistakes being repeated and policies not followed by caseworkers, many of whom are overworked and underresourced, how does the minister propose to address this critical shortcoming before your round-table in January?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not a given that there's a culture of secrecy. In fact, in the child welfare system and in the Human Services department we have been spending the last two years working better together, working on outcomes-based delivery, working on changes to practice that improve practice, not because the practice before was bad but because you can always learn from every circumstance and do better. That's what this department is dedicated to, that's what this government is dedicated to, and we're fully prepared to do it in public while protecting the privacy of those whose privacy needs to also be protected.

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

2:30

### Registry Services

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My constituency office in Edmonton-Ellerslie is receiving numerous inquiries from people wanting to open a business who are concerned that there are not enough registry agent offices in southeast Edmonton. Given that the province continues to grow very rapidly and that all registries are independent and privately owned businesses, how does your department determine when expansion of registry agencies is important to continue providing the level of service needed? That is to the Minister of Service Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have an expansion policy that we're working through with the Association of Alberta Registry Agents. I'm very pleased to announce, though, that we have put out an RFP for two new registry locations, one in the community of Chestermere and another in the community of Wabasca, where entrepreneurs from all sorts of different backgrounds are asked to put forward their best foot and bid on these new registry agent offices.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much. To the same minister: given that there's so much red tape, Mr. Speaker, in opening a registry – in fact, it's next to impossible – what is your ministry doing to ensure that the process is much more open and transparent so that some of the owners can have a fair opportunity to open a new business?

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, what we've done in this particular case is that we're asking two essential questions. First of all, what are prospective owners willing to do to make services more convenient and better for everyday, hard-working Albertans, whether that be a reduction in fees or longer hours? That's up to them, to put forward their best foot on innovation. The second is that it's up to them to tell us what this opportunity is worth to them. This is a government asset that the taxpayers of Alberta own, and it's up to the business owners to tell us what they're willing to pay for this asset.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much. My final question is to the same minister. Minister, there are private businesses wanting to open. You just made an announcement in Wabasca and Chestermere. Can we expect new requests for proposals in Calgary or in Edmonton-Ellerslie?

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a good question. We're working with our partner the Association of Alberta Registry Agents to see how and where we need further expansion beyond these two communities. I've had requests from, for example, the mayor of Blackfalds, Alberta, saying that they would like an office. So we're going to look with these particular officials and see whether more offices are warranted and work with our partners to make sure that we have fair, reasonable expansion.

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

### Mutual Fund Adviser Incorporation

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Various parties are asking for the Alberta Securities Commission to reconsider its restriction preventing mutual fund advisers from incorporating. As the Finance minister knows, mutual fund advisers in B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia are permitted to have commissions paid to an incorporated entity, but this is not allowed in Alberta. This inconsistency across the country creates an uneven playing field, causing unnecessary, burdensome paperwork for small businesses. Is the government considering changing the rules to allow mutual fund advisers to incorporate?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. It is an active file, and it is something that I would like to bring forward to the House. I hope to do so in the next sessions. There are some issues around certified financial planners, financial advisers. In fact, nationally they are talking about how we might have professional self-regulatory regulations and some of those sorts of things enveloped within that. But in terms of administering securities and the passport system, et cetera, we are meeting on that. It is something that Alberta is active in right now.

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

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you. Given that incorporation is a modern and efficient business structure offering several practical advantages, as you obviously realize, will the government confirm that it is meeting with concerned stakeholders to discuss a solution, or if not, when will it?

**Mr. Horner:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, indeed we have been meeting with several of the stakeholders involved in this as well as

in relation to our commitments with TILMA and with the New West Partnership as well as the rest of the provincial legislations. Again, it is something that I am very active in, and I look forward to bringing something to this Assembly in good time.

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

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the current restriction can result in individuals paying their accountants to do the same work twice, will the government ask the Alberta securities regulators to suspend the rule prohibiting mutual fund dealers' commissions being paid into a corporation?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, at this time we've not requested the Alberta Securities Commission to do that sort of thing. In fact, it's something that we stay away from, telling the Alberta securities regulators what to do. We do want the securities regulators to have as much length from the government as possible so that it allows them to do their job independently. Again, it's something that Mr. Rice and I have had discussions about and will continue to do so.

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

### Electricity Prices

**Mr. Xiao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are very concerned about the fluctuating costs of monthly electricity bills, and given the unpredictable nature of recent winters and the effects on electricity consumption they are bracing for a very expensive season. My question is to the hon. Minister of Energy. What is being done to address fluctuating electricity prices in our province in order to protect Albertans?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, last January the government responded to the Retail Market Review Committee recommendations, one of which was to allow the retail companies in the electricity business to purchase their electricity over a longer period of time. It's a technical solution, but what it allows to happen is to reduce some of the volatility for prices. In fact, if you look at the results of that over this fall, you'll see that prices for electricity are dropping each month over the last couple of months.

**Mr. Xiao:** To the same minister: given that many seniors live on a fixed budget and that many live from paycheque to paycheque, how can the government help vulnerable individuals with electricity costs?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are several options available to consumers. You know, we're all sensitive to the needs of people who are on fixed incomes. For one, they could actually secure a contract with their electricity retailer, or if they want to stay on the regulated rate option, they could actually choose a fixed monthly payment plan, which would help even out the costs of their electricity over the whole year. There are many ways, and I would encourage people to take the time to understand how they can manage the risk of volatility of their electricity price.

**Mr. Xiao:** Again to the same minister: given that in 1996 our electricity market was deregulated to allow for more competitive

pricing, what is being done to ensure that Albertans always receive the most competitive prices?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I would note, actually, that the prices even this month are, you know, under 8 cents per kilowatt hour. Prices are very reasonable. In fact, if you compare that rate across the country of Canada, you will see that the prices for electricity in Alberta are right in the mid-range of all other provinces except for those provinces that have very low-cost hydroelectricity. However, we have no public debt on the generating assets in this province of Alberta.

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

### EcoAg Initiatives Environmental Compliance

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few years rural Albertans and agricultural producers have repeatedly called on this government to protect their land and water quality from anybody who has failed to act as good quality stewards to the environment. The EcoAg plant near High River, operated by Tongue Creek limited, has been repeatedly fined for excessive authorization of volumes of waste to their facility, posing immediate health risks to the livestock in surrounding areas. To the minister of environment: why isn't your government taking action on this ongoing problem?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. I think it's an important question. We have certainly been working with EcoAg since 2009 to bring them into compliance. We have an enforcement order that was put in place. With the exception of a comprehensive groundwater monitoring program that we're working on with them on, they have met all of those. The enforcement order will remain in place until they have completed all of those enforcement order conditions that they must meet.

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

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that enforcement orders are designed to ensure immediate action to correct the situation and given that this government has issued numerous orders dating back to 2003, why has your government failed to protect the environment, especially with water, and enforce the orders you have issued?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the enforcement order is in place. They are meeting the majority of the conditions. We are working with them because we do expect them to meet the groundwater testing as well, and we will continue on with the enforcement order until that happens.

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

2:40

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that concerned residents have repeatedly echoed concerns about this facility, is this minister prepared to create a new and effective policy to ensure that all landowners near the facility will understand that they don't have to live beside this mess any longer?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue did go before the Environmental Appeals Board. That's where the recommendations were made to myself as minister or to the previous minister, and that's where the ministerial order came into place, which, really, essentially modified the environment appeal approval, making sure that they must meet compliance. We will continue to make sure that they do meet compliance with the enforcement order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I believe the bell went, so question period is over. We did get to 16 questions again today. That's 96 total questions and answers. I want to thank Edmonton-Mill Woods for being ever so brief, just a matter of a few seconds in his questions and his preambles. Calgary-Mountain View made an attempt after a lengthy preamble to his first question to shorten his preamble, if at all, to his first sup as did Cardston-Taber-Warner, Edmonton-McClung, and even Little Bow.

So thank you to all those members. It allowed more time for other questions.

Secondly, would you mind if we reverted briefly to intros by giving your unanimous consent?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** I have a list of four: the Deputy Premier, followed by the leader of the ND opposition, followed by Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I may introduce through you to the Assembly and ask you to welcome warmly 11 individuals from the Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education and particularly from the supply chain development unit. These individuals provide support to industry and expert advice to this government to help further develop Alberta's industrial sector. I believe they are with us today in the gallery. Fabulous. They've waited patiently. Thank you so much for doing so. With us today are Mr. Larry Wall – if you can please rise – Mr. Tom Mansfield, Mr. Paul McLaughlin, Mr. Antonio Hurtado, Ms Patricia Armitage, Ms Jacqueline Loke, Ms Elizabeth Pin, Ms Farrah Fulton, Ms Lynn Martinez, Ms Patricia Fuentes, and Mr. Rob MacDonald. Thank you so much and welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guests, who represent hundreds of thousands of workers in Alberta. They're here today because they're very concerned about the negative implications bills 45 and 46 will have on their members and Albertans as a whole. I believe that most of my guests, perhaps not all, are here. I would ask them to rise as I call their name: Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour; Siobhán Vipond, secretary-treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour; Brian Henderson, president of the Edmonton & District Labour Council; Marle Roberts, president of CUPE Alberta; Elisabeth Ballermann, president of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta; Ben Hendrickson, a board member from the HSAA; Judy Mayer, a labour relations officer with the HSAA; Mike Scott, president of CUPE local 30, the city

of Edmonton's outside workers; Carol Chapman, president of CUPE local 3550; Linda Harris and Gloria Lepine, also from CUPE 3550; Olav Rokne; Tony Clark; and Ishani Weera, who are staff members of the AFL. I would ask the members of the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie and Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Bob Hawkesworth. Bob is a former long-time alderman for the city of Calgary, also president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and no stranger to this House; he was the former MLA for Calgary-Mountain View. Bob is seated in the public gallery. I'd ask him to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests that have joined us today in the public gallery to represent their heritage language school and to show their support for Bill 211. My guests today are representatives from the International and Heritage Languages Association and from very, very different schools. Please rise as I call your names. To begin with, Dr. Alex Voloboev, International and Heritage Languages Association; Olga Prokhorova, president of International and Heritage Languages Association and a teacher, Russian Educational Centre; Josephine Pallard, past president of IHLA; Natalia Kovaliova, program co-ordinator for IHLA; Ms Aliya Tnaliyeva, Russian Educational Centre; Reuben Tut, Nuer Study Centre; Gatluak Ruot, Nuer Study Centre; Iryna Klymkiv, teacher at Ivan Franko School of Ukrainian Studies; Jagwinder Singh Sidhu, principal of Headway school, Mr. Speaker, your constituent; Manjit Singh Dhaliwal, board member, Headway school; and Kulvinder Thaira from Headway school as well. All of my guests have risen. I would ask that they please receive the traditional warm welcome.

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

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly guests that have joined us today in the public gallery to show their support for Bill 211, which will be introduced today in this House by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood. All the guests today are teachers from the Filipino language and cultural school of Edmonton. They're here to show their support for the many different heritages that will be impacted by Bill 211. I would ask that each of the guests rise as their name is called: Dr. Cesar Mejia, Carmelita Mejia, Alfonso Moster, Adelaida Moster, Merlyn Gonzales, and Linda Arma. I would ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm told that these members were prevented from being here earlier because of the very, very bad weather that we're all experiencing. So thank you for your indulgence.

In 20 seconds from now we will continue with Members' Statements, starting with Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.



## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Calgary-Bow and Calgary-Mountain-View.

### Education Act Regulatory Review

**Ms Kubinec:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education in Alberta is transforming. With the new Education Act that was passed in the Legislature last year, we are another step closer to bringing the vision of Inspiring Education to life. Achieving that vision will ensure that all of Alberta's children get the chance to reach their full potential, become engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Before the act comes into force, however, we need to ensure that the regulations align with the vision, providing clear direction to the education system and ensuring that we are putting the needs and the best interests of students first. To do this work, Minister Johnson asked me to serve with three of my MLA colleagues – Calgary-Currie, Edmonton-South West, and Calgary-Glenmore – along with the public member on the Education Act Regulatory Review Committee. Since May we have met with education stakeholders and the public from all across the province to hear their input on topics such as school fees, transportation, school closures, home education, and more.

The purpose of the consultation has been to hear a variety of ideas and perspectives, and we certainly have achieved that goal. Thousands of Albertans – students, parents, teachers, administrators, trustees, and other members of the public – shared their input in person, online, and through written submissions. We had almost 4,000 online applications. Although we may not have reached a consensus on every topic, we can all agree that in order to give our kids the skills they need to be successful and to continue to build Alberta, we need to keep the best interests of students at the forefront. That theme emerged loud and clear.

We are now in the midst of compiling the feedback we received and look forward to sharing what we heard as soon as possible so that we can continue to work on preparing regulations to help create an even stronger education system in Alberta.

I want to thank every Albertan for providing their feedback and sharing their perspectives.

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

2:50

### Impaired Driving

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In a heartbeat a tragic collision can take someone's life and change the lives of all those around them. It only takes a heartbeat to run a red light or to forget a shoulder check, and it only takes a heartbeat for someone to decide that they're going to get behind the wheel after sharing a few drinks with friends.

During the holiday season there are many wonderful occasions to gather with friends and family, and often alcohol will be offered at these celebrations. At this time of year especially but throughout the year our government is encouraging Albertans to plan ahead when spending time with loved ones or attending festivities. If you plan to drink, also plan a safe way to return home. Call a cab, use transit, or call a friend. Use safe alternative transportation.

We know that making a plan isn't always the first thing on our minds when we prepare to go out for the evening. As we know, after consuming alcohol, people are less likely to make wise choices and more likely to drive. Our research also shows that some people feel that if they're only driving a short distance, they will likely not be caught and there will likely be no consequences. It's a dangerous illusion.

We are all responsible for the choices we make. As drivers we need to ensure not only our own safety but the safety of others. If you feel your driving ability is impaired, regardless of how much alcohol you have consumed, find another way to get home. It's just not worth it.

Too often during the holidays lives are needlessly taken, and the grieving families are left behind. This holiday season make a plan to enjoy the festivities, and at the same time make a plan for a safe way to return home.

Thank you.

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

### Labour Legislation

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was an assault on human rights in Alberta today. Albertans who have chosen to join and work with a union do so with the understanding that they will enjoy the right to collective bargaining and, in rare circumstances when they cannot come to agreement with their employer, the right to independent arbitration. These rights are enshrined in section 2 of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This PC government has increasingly followed the mean-spirited and undemocratic approach of their federal cousins and chosen to eliminate the right to both collective bargaining and the right to strike by thousands of public servants regardless of cause. Why? Because they can through their majority in this Legislature. While this means profound disrespect for public servants in their employ, it also means costly war with unions, all unions since the precedent can ultimately affect all unionized Albertans and eventually all wage workers. Not only is this unprecedented in Canada, but it overthrows decades of constructive working relations with tens of thousands of workers in this province and opens up the likelihood of costly court battles, in which we all lose both morally and financially.

This government makes frequent allusions to their common values with the late Peter Lougheed. There's no doubt now that these are not Lougheed Tories as Lougheed brought in Bill 41 in 1977, allowing binding arbitration, and he championed fundamental rights and freedoms for all unionized Albertans. To add insult to injury, this PC government will close debate on these two odious bills that will violate worker rights after only six hours each.

All Albertans are coming to see this PC government of 43 years as lost, entitled, and abusive of the values and principles that created this great province. All Albertans of conscience will be adding their voices and demanding a reversal of these bills and of this government's moral legitimacy to govern this great province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two petitions to table. The first petition with 1,148 signatures is part of a larger group of petitions with over 3,500 signatures. This petition

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

The second petition that I am tabling, with 52 signatures, also asks the government of Alberta to introduce legislation that will help to preserve Alberta’s 65-year investment in the rearing, release, and hunting of pheasants program. Although the prayer is slightly different, this petition is part of a bigger group of petitions with over 3,500 signatures. Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by a large group of people who understand the value of the hunting culture and traditions of Alberta.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 211 Education (International Language Programs) Amendment Act, 2013

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 211, the Education (International Language Programs) Amendment Act, 2013.

Bill 211 is a step forward from Motion 513, which urged the government to promote and assist heritage language schooling in collaboration with local school board authorities to provide adequate access to school facilities. It aligns international language programs with the Ministry of Education’s mandate under the new Education Act, section 19, alternative programs. Bill 211 is an amendment to the Education Act that consolidates international language programs and gives parents and students the option to access classroom space when needed. It honours the education-by-option principle by leaving the choice in the hands of students and parents when requiring this program. A minimum of 20 students’ requests are required. It acknowledges the partnership rule among school boards, nonprofit community language schools, and parents.

This bill sets a new framework to deliver international language education in Alberta. It complements the great work currently undertaken by the Ministry of Education, and it takes it one step further to raise the bar to create a stable and a consistent learning environment for our children. Mr. Speaker, in the end it gives our children the added competitiveness to succeed in the 21st century global economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 211 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Wellness, followed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table the requisite number of copies of the Alberta College of Optometrists annual report. Now, the college is the professional and the regulatory body for 600-plus members in Alberta, and its mandate is to govern and regulate its members to ensure that Albertans continue to receive effective, safe, and ethical care by optometrists.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, followed by Red Deer-North.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure for me to table the appropriate number of copies of 10 pieces of correspondence that range from the AUMA, the AAMD and C, the mayor of Airdrie, the mayor of Calgary’s office, the mayor of Edmonton, the Calgary Regional Partnership, the Capital Region Board, and so on and so on, all endorsing the amendments to Bill 28 and asking us to pass the bill.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m very pleased to table documents with 61 signatures that request that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take the necessary steps to introduce amendments to existing legislation to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the pheasant release program. These documents were part of the larger petition but could not be presented as a petition because they did not meet the strict rules of a petition. There are five copies, and the people who signed these documents are just as serious about the preservation of the pheasant hunting traditions and culture as the other 3,500 signatures.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table five copies of an e-mail from Donette Kingyens to me expressing her concerns about changes to the public service pension plan. Ms Kingyens has put some personal notes on the end. She notes that when she retires, her entire means of supporting herself will be the earnings from her pension plan. She relies on what she’s contributing at this point, which is supposed to be into a guaranteed pension payout. It’s her only retirement plan, and the idea of it being reduced fills her with terror. I am very sympathetic to her plight. She is representing many other people.

Thank you very much.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, did you catch my attention a moment ago about the clock?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. If it pleases the House, perhaps we could have unanimous consent to complete the Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Let us conclude this section of our proceedings. The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m tabling the requisite copies for the enforcement order issued for the composting operator near High River, which I talked about earlier.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Today I’d like to table more copies of the handwritten letters my office has been receiving expressing concerns about the deep cuts to postsecondary education that are happening here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with your indulgence, I, too, have a tabling unless there's anyone else.

Seeing no one else, allow me, then, to table the requisite number of copies of a memorandum dated November 29, 2013, from the Deputy Premier to your Speaker concerning the question of privilege raised in the Assembly last week. Enclosed with this memorandum from the Deputy Premier to me are the following documents: a government of Alberta news release dated November 27, 2013, concerning Bill 46; a media notice from the government of Alberta dated November 26, 2013, concerning a technical briefing on bills 45 and 46; and finally, a government of Alberta news release dated November 27 concerning Bill 45.

Hon. members, we have two points of order, both raised by Airdrie within a very limited timeframe. Did you wish to deal with them both at once, hon. member, or separately?

**Mr. Anderson:** In the interests of time, because we do have private members' business, I'm going to withdraw those points of order so we can move on.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Both points of order have been withdrawn by the hon. Member for Airdrie.

We can now move on to the point of privilege. [interjections] I don't want to interrupt the Minister of Finance and the Member for Airdrie; however, I shall on this occasion.

### Privilege

#### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have a somewhat lengthy ruling, and I hope I could have your attention as I go through it. Your chair has given very serious and careful consideration, and I'm now prepared to rule on the purported question of privilege that was raised by the leader of the New Democrat opposition on Wednesday, November 27, 2013, which was subsequently argued by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that day and can be found at pages 3166 and 3167 of *Alberta Hansard*.

The members for Airdrie, Edmonton-Centre, and the Deputy Premier also participated in that discussion, and their comments can also be found in *Hansard* on pages 3167 through 3170 for last Wednesday.

The central issue of the purported point of privilege is this. Did the government's brochure, titled *The Building Alberta Plan*, prejudice the actions of a committee of this Assembly, and was this Assembly also, perhaps, prejudged with respect to presuming passage of certain bills and whether a news conference on bills 45 and 46 was also somehow disadvantaged by not all members having seen them before they were offered to others outside the Assembly? The brochure that I referred to was tabled on November 27 by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and is now Sessional Paper 1181/2012-13.

With respect to the formalities the Speaker's office did receive notice of the purported question of privilege on Wednesday, November 27, at 11:20 a.m., so the requirements of Standing Order 15(2) were in fact met. The November 27 notice of the question of privilege from the leader of the ND opposition referred to that his ability to perform as a member of the Members' Services Committee had been breached "by actions which have predetermined a decision yet to be made by the committee."

The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona clarified and expanded upon the alleged breaches of privilege during her November 27 comments, that I referenced a moment ago. Essentially, there are

actually three purported questions of privilege, which the chair outlined last Thursday, November 28, at page 3208 of *Alberta Hansard*.

The first is that the brochure prejudged a decision of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services by referring to the multiyear wage freeze taken by MLAs as that decision had not yet been made and was, in fact, not made until the committee met last Friday, November 29.

The second point is that the brochure prejudged a decision by the Assembly as it referred to public-sector employees taking multiyear wage freezes when that was the subject of at least one bill before the Assembly. The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was at a disadvantage on that point as Bill 46, the Public Service Salary Restraint Act, had been introduced in the Assembly literally minutes before she rose to speak to the question of privilege. In fact, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona did not have the bill when she was speaking.

The third purported question of privilege concerns a news conference about bills 45 and 46 prior to their introduction in the Assembly.

Now, the chair finds that it appears that the member raised the question of privilege concerning the Members' Services Committee at the earliest opportunity since that leader received the brochure in question on Tuesday. The notice did not refer to the news conference on the bills, which is the subject of another related question of privilege, but given the circumstance the chair is satisfied that it was raised when the event occurred and does meet the requirements of Standing Order 15(5). Likewise, the issue about the brochure, assuming that Bill 46 had passed, was raised at the earliest opportunity and was done so under Standing Order 15(5) as well.

The following day your chair asked the government some questions concerning the purported question of privilege, which can be found at pages 3208 and 3209 of *Alberta Hansard* for November 28. The chair asked when the brochure was produced, who produced it, when and how and to whom it was distributed, and whatever other information might be useful for your chair to know under the circumstances.

With respect to the news conference on bills 45 and 46 the chair asked whether it was a news conference. Was it a technical briefing? Exactly what was it? What time did it start? What did it finish? Was there more than one media session or technical briefing, and where was it held?

Earlier today your chair – moments ago, actually – tabled the November 29, 2013, memo by the Deputy Premier to me, in which was provided answers to these questions. The chair had asked that any response be received before 4 p.m. last Friday, and the Deputy Premier's memo was in fact received in my office at 3:27 p.m. on that day.

Now, with respect to the allegation concerning premature disclosure at news conferences, I have this to say. The response from the Deputy Premier clears up the purported question of privilege alleging that there was a news conference concerning bills 45 and 46 prior to their introduction in the Assembly on November 27. To release details of a bill or the bill itself to persons who are not members once the bill is on notice on the Order Paper but before it is introduced in the Assembly could be a contempt of the Assembly as you all likely know. This ground has been covered recently in the Assembly in the context of a purported question of privilege involving the Minister of Transportation and Bill 32. On October 31, 2013, it was found that there was no prima facie case of privilege. Members can find the applicable citations to the relevant authorities at pages 2655

through 2657 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. There were some comments in that ruling that will be referred to later.

In his November 29, 2013, memo on the purported questions of privilege the Deputy Premier indicated that there was to be a technical briefing followed by a news conference on the two bills in question. He states:

The Bills were introduced at approximately 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 27, 2013. A news release was issued after each Bill was introduced: the Bill 45 news release was issued at 3:09 and the Bill 46 news release was issued at 3:10 . . . The technical briefing with the media did not begin until after the Bills were introduced and the Ministers both arrived in the media room.

The Deputy Premier attached the news releases to his memo, which I referred to moments ago.

### 3:10

In fairness, the Deputy Premier provided similar information in his remarks on the purported question of privilege at page 3170 of *Alberta Hansard* for November 27, 2013. Accordingly, there was no release of the bill or any technical briefing provided to persons who were not members prior to the introduction of those bills in this Assembly. For the record *Hansard* advises that Bill 45 was read a first time at 3:03 p.m. and Bill 46 at 3:04 p.m. on the day in question. As there was no early release of information, there is no prima facie question of privilege on that point.

Now, with respect to presuming decisions of the Assembly and its committees, I have the following comments to make. The next two purported questions of privilege are not as easily dealt with. The document that precipitated these questions of privilege was the aforementioned brochure called *The Building Alberta Plan*. On page 6 of this document the following statement appears.

Public sector employees, including teachers, doctors and government managers – as well as MLAs – are leading by example with multi-year wage freezes because it's the responsible thing to do for our province.

It actually goes on, also, to talk about MLA pay being frozen for one year.

With respect to the timing of the brochure in question the Deputy Premier was very forthcoming in his November 29, 2013, memo. He indicates that "printing of *The Building Alberta Plan* started the week of October 7, 2013." Enough copies were printed for every Alberta home. Delivery of that brochure to the public, according to the Deputy Premier, "began November 21, 2013."

Now on the issue of a multiyear pay freeze for members there was a motion for consideration of the Members' Services Committee provided to the Speaker's office by the Member for Calgary-Varsity on Monday, November 25, 2013, which was then very quickly sent out to all members of the committee that day by my Speaker's office along with another notice as requested by the leader of the ND opposition.

Last Friday, November 29, 2013, the Members' Services Committee agreed to a freeze in salary or, more accurately, not to apply the mechanism for providing increases to members' salaries until March 31, 2017. Prior to that meeting the committee had voted at its February 7, 2013, meeting to suspend the increase in MLA salaries for one year; that is, until March 31, 2014. No motion was passed to suspend the increase over a number of years. There has not been such a motion since the new remuneration rates for members were put into place following the 2012 general election.

As discussed, Bill 46, which imposes a settlement on public service employees should an agreement not be reached, was not introduced in this Assembly until Wednesday, November 27. In his memo the Deputy Premier indicates that the text of the

brochure was written in October and that distribution commenced on November 21. Clearly, this was well before there was any motion proposed to the Members' Services Committee for a multiyear freeze and certainly before any was approved. It may go without saying, but this was also well before there was indication to the Assembly that Bill 46 was forthcoming.

In terms of what aspect of the doctrine of parliamentary privilege might apply, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona provided the definition of contempt from the standard Commonwealth text *Erskine May*, 24th edition, at page 251:

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

In the October 31, 2013, ruling, which was referenced earlier, your chair used the definition of contempt found at page 82 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. That reference can be found at page 2656 of *Alberta Hansard*. The point is that a contempt of the Assembly differs from a breach of privilege since contempts may be affronts to the dignity or authority of the Assembly, which may not fall into a category of specifically defined privileges.

In 1989, for example, Speaker Fraser of the Canadian House of Commons commented on this distinction when he was faced with a similar question to what is now before this Assembly. In the House of Commons case the government of the day advertised on August 26, 1989, that "Canada's Federal Sales Tax System will change. Please save this notice. It explains the changes and the reasons for them." The tax of the day was to be replaced by the goods and services tax, the GST. The legislation to put the GST in place had not however yet been passed, which led to a serious question of privilege in the House of Commons.

In his October 10, 1989, ruling on this subject, found at pages 4457 through 4461 of *House of Commons Debates*, Speaker Fraser stated at page 4459:

In summary, all breaches of privileges are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege. A contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member; it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results.

In the case before us today it is argued that the ND opposition leader was obstructed in performing his duties. I reject that argument, largely for the same reasons Speaker Fraser did in 1989. He stated, once again at page 4459 of *House of Commons Debates*:

In order for an obstruction to take place, there would have had to be some action which prevented the House or Members from attending to their duties, or which cast such serious reflections on a Member that he or she was not able to fulfill his or her responsibilities. I would submit this is not the case in the present situation.

However, this finding alone does not end the matter. The actions by the government of our day could constitute a contempt if it is found that they offend the dignity and authority of this Assembly. Members may recall that in the October 31, 2013, ruling in the Alberta Legislative Assembly your Speaker gave the following warning at pages 2656 and 2657 of *Alberta Hansard*:

Furthermore, in my view, any prior advertising about the nature of a bill must be undertaken very, very cautiously, if it is undertaken at all, so as to not create any impression that the contents of the bill are already law when the Assembly has not even seen the bill yet, much less debated it and passed it. In this

respect, members may wish to examine the decision of the Ontario Speaker in 1997 when the government of the day advertised a certain bill as if it had already been passed. In this respect, please visit Ontario *Hansard* of January 22, 1997, at pages 6441 through 6443.

Now, in that Ontario case of January 22, 1997, a prima facie case of contempt was found, and in his ruling the then Speaker of the Ontario House, Speaker Stockwell, states, with respect to the House of Commons case, at page 6442 of Ontario *Hansard* for January 22, 1997, as follows:

In ruling that there was no case for contempt, Speaker Fraser appears to have accepted the submissions of government ministers that the government had never intended the advertisements in question to be anything more than “informational” and that it had never been “the government’s intention to suggest that legislation would not be submitted to Parliament for debate.”

3:20

For your information, I listened very intently to the submissions made by the Deputy Premier on November 27, and I did not hear the sort of assurances that guided Speaker Fraser in 1989. In finding a prima facie case of contempt in Ontario, Speaker Stockwell said at pages 6442 and 6443 of Ontario *Hansard*:

It is not enough for yet another Speaker to issue yet another warning or caution in circumstances where the wording and circulation of the pamphlet appear on their face to cross the line. I say in all candour that a reader of that document could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in Ontario, an impression that undermines respect for our parliamentary institutions.

Obviously, your Speaker has very serious concerns about the advertising that was undertaken in the Alberta brochure, which is central to the point of privilege before us today. As indicated in my earlier comments, the Alberta government was warned to not try and presume that the Assembly would pass legislation through some form of their own advertising. As your Speaker I was representing the interests and role of the Assembly in our parliamentary form of democracy.

In Alberta and throughout Canada we have a form of responsible government. As Speaker Kowalski, my predecessor, commented, on May 1, 1997, at page 319 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day:

the principle of the executive being responsible to the Assembly is the cornerstone of responsible government in this country.

In his text *Constitutional Law of Canada*, third edition, by author Peter Hogg, Mr. Hogg goes so far as to say: “Responsible government is probably the most important non-federal characteristic of the Canadian Constitution.” In the province of Alberta the executive is composed of the members of the Executive Council, all of whom have taken and subscribed to the oath for cabinet ministers.

In his 1989 ruling at page 4461 of *House of Commons Debates* Speaker Fraser requested that departments study his ruling carefully, pointing out that “we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy.”

In your chair’s view, the situation is more similar to what occurred in Ontario in 1997 rather than to what occurred in the House of Commons in 1989, as I referenced earlier in these comments, because this government of Alberta was warned recently, as recently as October 31 of this year, in a previous ruling that I made and within which I advised the government that it should not advertise in a way that presumes a decision of the Assembly or, by extension, a decision not yet made by one of the Assembly’s committees.

It is clear to your chair that the advertising in the brochure I referenced earlier did presume that a decision had been made by the Members’ Services Committee, to which the Assembly has delegated the ability to make decisions about members’ pay and benefits. That decision had not been made, in fact. That decision had not been made until the following Friday. Let me make sure I said that correctly: I am of the opinion that the advertising in the brochure presumed a decision that had not yet been made by the Members’ Services Committee.

The chair also finds that the brochure created the impression that legislation was in effect concerning public service salaries when, in fact, the bills had not been introduced. The advertising does show some disrespect for our legislative process and by extension, perhaps, for the Assembly itself. It should be very clear that in our form of democratic government the Assembly is owed total respect by the Executive Council, by all members of government, by all members of the House regardless of the capacity in which they serve.

The continued absence of adherence to some of the proprieties of this institution causes your chair a great deal of grief and anguish, and it also caused us again an enormous number of hours of research dealing with case precedent, dealing with former rulings, looking at other Assemblies, and so on and so on. I would estimate that collectively we spent almost 200 hours over the weekend, a number of us, looking into this and asking Speakers in other jurisdictions and other Parliamentary Counsels and so on for their examples. I would hope that the dignity and authority of this Assembly and of its delegated committees would be given greater respect from this day forward.

Accordingly, your chair finds that the advertising undertaken by the government on page 6 of the aforementioned brochure, The Building Alberta Plan, does constitute a prima facie case of privilege. It’s a breach of that privilege under Standing Order 15(6) as it is a form of contempt of this Assembly and of one of its committees.

That concludes my ruling on that matter. I would invite anyone from the government side should they wish to rise and issue a statement of whatever kind, and I’ll deal with it from there.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, I will accept your ruling. In no way, shape, or form would this government ever under any circumstances want to offend the dignity of this House and the importance of the Legislative Assembly and the parliamentary process, that we all strive to adhere to.

But if I may, Mr. Speaker, in my acceptance of your ruling point out to you that you very clearly make comments relevant to the mechanism by which MLAs’ salaries are to be increased. I would point you to your own website, Mr. Speaker, the legislative . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I’m offering you a chance to perhaps apologize for the breach. That’s what I’m expecting at this stage. We have not rehearsed any of this, as you know, but that would be customary. If you’re willing to do that, then the Assembly, including myself, would be more than anxious to hear it, particularly since you’ve accepted the Speaker’s ruling, for which I thank you.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, by no means would this government ever offend the dignity of this Legislative Assembly, and if, in your learned opinion, such has occurred, I do sincerely apologize.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier. That would close the matter.

I would like to mention one thing to you, Deputy Premier, and to all members of Executive Council, and that is this. In looking at the history of how matters similar to this have been dealt with in other Assemblies, I did note that members commented on how beneficial it was for their staff, particularly Executive Council staff, to meet with the Clerk and with some of our Parliamentary Counsel members in order to be better guided and better counselled on how some of our systems, protocols, and procedures work.

In particular, there are references made on websites such as the one you've just mentioned and elsewhere about the purpose and function of the Public Affairs Bureau, which was contained in one of your answers as a reference. In particular, the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau helps government communicate, for example. In particular, the Premier's communications unit also has a specific function in that respect.

Looking at ministry overviews, just for the benefit of all members, please know that there are eight different aspects that come under the Ministry of Executive Council. Executive Council is a short way of saying cabinet or a short way of saying the government of Alberta. The office of the Premier is one, and it's responsible for communications, according to the website. Another one is the cabinet co-ordination office. It oversees tracking and regular reporting on proposed government legislation up to the introduction of bills in the Assembly. Another one is the aforementioned Public Affairs Bureau, which advances government communication with Albertans and distributes government news releases, co-ordinates government advertising, and it goes on. I'm not going to read them all for you.

I only mention this – why? – because I know that there are a number of new people, not only in this Assembly but new people out there supporting ministers, supporting private members on both sides of the House, who may not have the benefit of that education and training. I would undertake a suggestion – please, hon. Deputy Premier, you might want to receive it as a recommendation – that you seriously consider taking up that generous offer, which I'm going to make on behalf of the Clerk and his staff, to meet with them in order to get a more complete understanding of the role of the Assembly and its rights and immunities, and I'm referring to the staff who support you in particular. All of you are welcome to consult with the Clerk, with myself, or with any of our Parliamentary Counsel at any time.

3:30

But we've got to fix up this system so that it stops and does not continue again. I've taken a long time explaining myself. I do not want to stand here and explain myself again and again and again on this kind of a matter.

I thank you for the apology. I note the sincerity, Deputy Premier, with which you delivered it. I shall hold you and all members to your word on that, and I hope that your staff will read *Hansard* so that they can benefit from your comments and mine as well.

That concludes this matter.

#### Point of Clarification

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, under section 13(2), and it's truly just a question, how would we at this point as an opposition – or is it even in our purview to do this? – refer something like this to the appropriate committee on this issue? Or, once you close the matter, is that just it?

**The Speaker:** That's a very good question, Airdrie, and thank you for asking it.

Had the government not apologized for it, you would have been free to bring a motion forward to this Assembly, because once the Speaker has made a ruling, then the matter belongs to the Assembly. It doesn't belong to the Speaker. I find whether there's a prima facie case; I did. I asked the Deputy Premier if he wished to comment, and he started to comment in an elongated way. I tried to shorten it up and say: here is what I think the Assembly is after. I don't think that anyone was really seriously harmed or hurt throughout this whole process, but neither would I want someone to be, and certainly the rights and dignities of this House could have been tarnished had there not been immediate action taken with the apology.

We'll leave it there. I think, Deputy Premier, you had a comment, but before you do, since I've recognized Airdrie – I don't want to get into opening a debate – very briefly, hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, your clarification is under 13(2), I assume.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, considering that this is just not so common, we want to learn from it. I'm wondering if there is a possibility for us to make a motion tomorrow under Standing Order 15(6). I just wanted to seek clarification on that, too.

**The Speaker:** Well, I think I answered that question in part already with respect to the question asked by Airdrie. The matter is now concluded in this respect, hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, so we're not going to pursue it. A motion is not required, necessary, nor would it be, in my view at least, in order tomorrow since the matter has been concluded with the apology that had just been offered.

Now, Deputy Premier, let's hear what your final comment is. Is this under 13(2) as well?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Correct, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of wanting to learn from this exercise, is there a possibility that the Legislative Assembly Office could further clarify, not on the Assembly's time but through different means, how we reconcile the fact that, clearly, on the records of the Legislative Assembly it indicates that the mechanism for increase of salary was not utilized since 2009, yet the Clerk tabled a report saying . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. member, I thought you were rising under 13(2) to seek clarification of the ruling itself. There are other processes for debates. You can exchange letters. You can certainly talk to other members. You can raise it in this House under any number of ways. You have government motions. You have a variety of ways that you can address that question. The point that I think you're driving at is that MLA pay has been frozen for the last year. It's frozen again now for three more years, and that's now a matter of record.

Okay. Let us move forward.

### Orders of the Day

#### Written Questions

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

#### Supports Intensity Scale Interviews

Q42. Mr. Wilson:

From May 1, 2009, to May 1, 2013, how many individuals were trained to complete supports intensity scale interviews,

and what specific training is required in order to qualify them to administer the interview?

#### **Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program**

Q43. Mr. Wilson:

From May 1, 2012, to May 1, 2013, how many clients did the persons with developmental disabilities program serve, and how many completed the supports intensity scale interview process?

### **Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading**

#### **Bill 208 Seniors' Advocate Act**

[Debate adjourned November 25: Mrs. Forsyth speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, I believe you have five minutes left should you wish to take it.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, put forward by my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who's our Seniors critic. It's sad to be standing on this day after what was presented to us, the heartbreaking story of a senior in care. It highlights the broken system that we have.

The bill, as indicated by her, will create an office of an independent seniors' advocate. Now, I know what the government is going to say about this bill. They may get up to say how much they've done for seniors, how there is a strategy, how there is a policy and all kinds of programs for seniors, and that they've even announced the establishment of an advocate who would report to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of stories out there about senior abuse, and I'd like to talk for a moment about one of those seniors. By the time the ambulance showed up at her house, the senior's screams were, as paramedics would later describe, already at 10 out of 10. On the bed in the foyer lay an 88-year-old senior, her eyes screwed up in agony, her skin covered in feces, with a broken leg gone untended for weeks. The fact that she lived in the house was a surprise to her neighbours. No one had seen her. No one had any idea how she had spent her final days in pain. None of them knew that her daughter and caretaker had waited weeks before calling for help.

This senior has joined a large and growing number of elderly people across this world who live and die in silence, left to fend for themselves. This type of abuse, which also includes neglect, is still so hidden that it's hard to quantify. The broad picture painted by the Associated Press and gleaned from hundreds of interviews and dozens of studies is that world-wide tens of millions of seniors "have become victims, trapped between governments and families, neither of which has figured out how to protect or provide for them." By the year 2050 there will be more seniors than there are children, and that's a startling fact.

Seniors are people who have worked long and hard to contribute to the world we live in today, but as they age, their bodies and minds slowly diminish, and as such they can become a target for those who wish to prey on this vulnerable population. Many seniors don't report abuse for fear of retaliation from their abuser, from their caretaker, or from those who want to take care of them.

The seniors' advocate office will represent their rights, their interests, their viewpoints, and be a kind and willing ear. They are the one person seniors can go to when they feel no one else will listen to them or, for that matter, believe them. The seniors' advocate will be able to visit with any senior. I know how scared seniors are about speaking out. Residents are afraid to speak out. They are afraid to speak out about the quality of the food; they're afraid to speak out about the quality of the care.

Mr. Speaker, the government loves to promise things to seniors. There's a Seniors' Week, a Seniors Advisory Council, even a Grey Matters Conference. Lots of deliberation but, quite frankly, not the action seniors are looking for. Seniors are feeling lost in the shuffle.

Now, the government will speak eloquently about how people struggle to navigate the health care system. The common denominator here, however, is the government. It can be so impersonal and daunting that seniors feel lost. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Their families feel lost. Half the time the government is the one that's lost.

Seniors need someone that can navigate the system with them. The seniors' advocate will have real power. They'll be able to meet with any senior they need to. They'll be able to intervene on a senior's behalf if problems arise in long-term care, home care, or continuing care. They'll be able to intervene when problems arise with trustees of seniors, and they'll be able to intervene when a senior isn't sure what to do or, for that matter, who to reach out to. All are important issues, and quite frankly the government needs to do less talking, pass this bill, and proclaim it.

We owe our seniors a great deal of gratitude, Mr. Speaker. They spent their lives building this province. They've raised children, and they've contributed to the communities. Now that they are growing older and becoming physically and mentally more vulnerable, we must provide them an independent voice.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of our fellow members in this Assembly to vote for the bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Calgary-Glenmore for the moment. There are others on the list if time permits.

3:40

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and continue debate on Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, brought forth by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. To begin with, I'd like to acknowledge the vital role that seniors have played in our province. Seniors play a significant role in the history of Alberta's families and communities. They are the foundation of our province and the link to our history, our past. Our families today have gained much from their experiences. In many ways today they've helped shape the Alberta that we know and love. Because of this, it's more important than ever that seniors' voices be heard loud and clear.

With the recent announcement of a health advocate office, Mr. Speaker, we are listening. An advocate, by definition, works to promote awareness and understanding of the cause or the ability to change public opinion or cause a shift in people's perceptions or understanding of an issue. Now, our government saw the need for preparations to be made in order to effectively accommodate a vibrant and growing seniors population. This included improving existing programs as well as further streamlining and elevating the ways in which seniors receive the services needed to meet ongoing and evolving concerns.

This need was also realized through the proclamation of the Alberta Health Act, which established a seniors' advocate, fulfilling this government's commitment to help seniors and their families access supports and services in a timely and efficient way. Mr. Speaker, one could say that the Seniors Advisory Council was created in order to mitigate many concerns facing the seniors population. The Seniors Advisory Council is a government-appointed body reporting to the Minister of Health. Bill 208, however, proposes that a seniors' advocate be established as an officer of the Legislature. Now, this means that the seniors' advocate would be arm's length from the government.

Mr. Speaker, the council's main roles are to provide advice and information to the province regarding many of the challenges faced by seniors as they relate to their standard of living. Council members work to address a multitude of issues impacting the seniors population across Alberta. The role of the council has become even more important as the seniors population in Alberta has expanded to over 425,000 as of January of last year. This demographic will only continue to grow as the baby-boomer generation ages and many begin to retire.

Mr. Speaker, one of the ways that the advisory council ensures that seniors' voices are heard is through annual tours to various regions of the province to consult with seniors as well as service providers. In June of 2011 council members, in fact, toured the constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner to consult with staff and residents. This interaction helped to raise issues most relevant to seniors in the region such as the quality of accommodation, availability of services, and satisfaction with staff that were raised to the touring council members. By the way, we have since toured Calgary and Edmonton. Others highlighted the availability of health services on-site or from community providers. Those working in seniors' facilities also brought forward concerns regarding the ability to retain staff, ongoing building renovations, and crossgovernment funding co-ordination.

The very structure of this advisory council, the fact that it is a government-appointed body reporting to the Minister of Health, ensured that the council's key recommendations could inform important policy decisions affecting Alberta seniors. Policy development often benefits from this relationship with the council, and this means seniors will benefit as well.

Although I commend the member opposite for bringing forward this proposed legislation, I am concerned that having an arm's-length body may hinder the very intent of having an advocate in the first place. As we have seen with the effectiveness of the advisory council, having a body which reports to the Health minister is crucial to ensuring that lasting changes are made to policy, programming, and the delivery of services for our seniors population. This effectiveness is exemplified through the council's work in the 2011-2012 fiscal year. During this time the council helped with the continued implementation of policies, programs, and services guided by the aging population policy framework.

Mr. Speaker, the council also played a significant role in the development of materials that addressed financial and elder abuse and provided insights on continuing care initiatives. In addition, council also fulfilled its mandate by providing further guidance in the development of information workshops to support the creation of a more age-friendly Alberta.

Another strength of the council is the diverse makeup of its boards and members. Appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, members come from varying experiential backgrounds, from medical professionals to university academics to regular Albertans who are seniors themselves and have advocated for other seniors. Through their work members ensure they consult with seniors, seniors' organizations, and other bodies to proac-

tively gather information and provide advice to the Minister of Health, as detailed in their mission statement.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that this issue has garnered attention in the House. As this government continues to build Alberta, we project that the percentage of seniors in our province will increase from approximately 11 per cent to 15 per cent of the total population, and by 2036 it is projected that there will be more than a million seniors right here in Alberta, or 1 in 5 Albertans. It's crucial that we never forget just how important our seniors are to this province. After all, they are the men and women that built the successful Alberta that we know today.

As more and more Albertans begin to age and retire, it's our job to ensure that we care for them by providing effective services, and this means developing legislation, policies, funding, and program co-ordination to meet their essential needs. Not only are seniors a valuable and respected resource, but they're also an integral part of Alberta's families and communities, and, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we increase the recognition of the seniors population. That's why our government has proclaimed the Alberta Health Act and created the seniors' advocate role. The advocate will be involved in requesting inspections, investigations, and quality and safety assessments related to care provided in seniors' facilities, engaging seniors and stakeholders on seniors' issues as well as ordering investigations into reports of seniors' abuse while in care.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors' advocate will in many ways complement the work that the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta is already doing, and I would like to thank the hon. member opposite for bringing this bill forward. However, I am concerned that the proposed legislation in its current form will not have a lasting effect on services for our seniors and would interfere with the seniors' advocate role that will be in place.

I look forward to hearing the remainder of the debate. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw in place of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods, and I have Bonnyville-Cold Lake on the list as well.

**Mr. Wilson:** Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your making that switch on the fly on our behalf here. I think that this is a very important discussion for our Legislature to have, and it's very timely in the sense of what we saw in the child welfare system. Now, we don't need to rehash everything that we've heard in the child welfare system, but in the quick Coles Notes version of it: 145 children who have died in care since 1999, 89 of which we just learned about last week.

The one feather in the cap that the government was able to have in response to this misconduct of responsibility was the fact that in 2012 they made the office of the Child and Youth Advocate independent of this Legislature. It was the one thing where consistently, every single day, anyone in this debate could say: "You know what? They did the right thing." By making it independent, it allows the office to look at the case files, to make recommendations, to do it outside the auspices of the ministry, which makes it that much more effective and that much more binding, I would suppose, for what the government should do about it.

It just seems so odd to me to listen to the debate coming from the other side. Here we have a member saying that the seniors' population is expanding, it's growing, that 1 in 5 Albertans within the next few years is going to be a senior but that we really



shouldn't make the seniors' advocate independent of this Legislature because it's just not politically convenient. What's politically convenient is for us to stand up and say: hey, we proclaimed an act that we passed three years ago. Well, good for you.

**3:50**

The reality is that without having this body as independent, the same thing is going to happen as what happened with the Child and Youth Advocate prior to 2012. It was under the ministry; it answered to the minister. It was not as effective as it could have been, which is why it was moved to be an independent office, and it was the right decision. When this government makes the right decisions, we'll be here to support them and to say that it was the right decision. So April 2012: congratulations; you did the right thing. Our child welfare system is in a better position because the office of the Child and Youth Advocate is independent. You did the right thing.

It's time to reconsider your position on this one and do it again for the exact same reasons you did then. To stand up and suggest that it would be a more effective body under the ministry makes absolutely no sense, and I cannot believe for a second that not one of you sees it that way. It's very unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my remarks. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms L. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a matter that is about seniors' care. This is not about politics; this is about the care of the seniors in Alberta. As we discuss Bill 208, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for bringing the matter forward. The importance we give to seniors and the actions we take to address their concerns is of defining value for not only this government and for this Legislature but for our society.

We are aware of the difficulties seniors and their families face when confronted with the challenges of taking care of one another. Those who care for and advocate on behalf of our seniors are providing a valuable service to society. Our seniors deserve society's respect and support, Mr. Speaker, now and in the years to come. That is why I would like to compliment the hard work and attention paid by all members to Bill 208, and I congratulate its intentions.

While the intentions of Bill 208 are indeed worthy of praise, we should also consider the benefits that a seniors' advocate that reports to the Health minister will have as has been determined by the announcement of the new health advocate. The newly announced health advocate's office will assist Albertans in navigating the health system and will contain three advocates: a health advocate, a seniors' advocate, and a mental health patient advocate. The new seniors' advocate role will include requesting inspections, investigations, and quality and safety assessments related to care provided in seniors' facilities as laid out in Alberta law.

It will also ensure that complaints and concerns are referred to the appropriate channels, including education on the rights, interests, and needs of seniors. The seniors' advocate will work to provide information and referrals for seniors, their families, and caregivers regarding government-funded seniors' health, continuing care, and social support programs and services. Mr. Speaker, most seniors' services are health related, and these services are best navigated by someone who is aligned with the Ministry of

Health. Again, this is an important distinction, and we should place emphasis on it as we discuss Bill 208.

Further to this, Mr. Speaker, we should also remember that several government departments share responsibilities for the various aspects of seniors' services and programs, including health and housing. If we want to keep our focus on seniors and on the best results for them and their families, then it makes sense to look at the best possible means for giving them direct access to the resources that are available. If you want to get the right information and work to co-ordinate the best results, you have to take advantage of the resources that are within the government departments. This is particularly true when it comes to advocating on behalf of our seniors, and the newly consolidated health advocate will improve upon collaboration, reduce duplication, and streamline administration.

The benefits of having direct access to the resources available are immediately apparent. A seniors' advocate working within the health advocate's office will place expert knowledge as close to the minister as possible and in alignment with the policy-makers. This has the advantage of direct and immediate knowledge of the key issues and potential solutions as they unfold. Seniors' issues are complex, varied, and the contexts in which they arise are often dynamic and emotional. Dynamic, too, are the types of solutions required to successfully mitigate the variety of challenges faced on seniors' issues.

While Bill 208 increases awareness of these challenges, Mr. Speaker, allow me to give a brief context to the points I've already made. According to the profile in Alberta Seniors' report released in 2010, the seniors' population in Alberta spans more than two generations, with an age range from 65 to more than a hundred years. Alberta's seniors population has varying backgrounds, incomes, living arrangements, and levels of health. This is why it is imperative that the solutions we present have an implicit flexibility, flexibility in co-ordination and flexibility in how available resources are mobilized. The solutions should also help Albertans and their families navigate the province's health care system.

A seniors' advocate that reports to the Health minister best allows for that flexibility. This advocate will be capable of successfully adapting to the dynamic environment in which seniors' issues arise. It will put the right knowledge and the right expertise in the right place beside the minister, and the minister would be able to make the best informed decisions in the light of the close and co-operative relationship with the seniors' advocate, under the umbrella of the health advocate's office within the context of the Alberta Health Act. Mr. Speaker, a seniors' advocate reporting to the Health minister is in a better position to do the right thing, and that is putting seniors and their families first.

Bill 208 does an admirable job of drawing awareness to the importance of seniors' issues. We all recognize that preparations must be made in order to accommodate our growing seniors population. That includes improving existing programs and further streamlining and enhancing the ways in which seniors have access to services to meet ongoing and evolving needs.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of what our government has accomplished for Alberta seniors. In 2012 the ministry assumed responsibility for the support programs and services provided to seniors through the former ministry of Seniors, helping improve continuity in both short- and long-term care services. Currently the Minister of Health, working in collaboration with other ministries and departments, offers a variety of support services and programs for Alberta seniors.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with the announcement of this new health advocate office our government is creating a single advocacy office that brings health, mental health, and seniors' advocacy into one place, a place where it is now easier for Albertans to take their concerns, a place to provide education and direction to help people understand the health charter, to navigate through the health system and learn where and how to access health care services. This also acts as proof that our government is not only willing to do what is necessary to take care of our seniors but that we are bound by our duty to go beyond that by proactively improving the quality of life our seniors have worked hard for and which they deserve.

The Seniors Advisory Council of Alberta, who reports to the Health minister, is another strong example of the proactive approach our government takes in addressing seniors' issues. The council acts as a liaison for seniors, stakeholders, and government. Their hard work, research, engagement in province-wide consultations, and commitment to addressing a multitude of seniors' issues is invaluable to the development of legislation, policy, funding decisions, and the co-ordination of programs and seniors' services.

As we discuss Bill 208, we should recognize how policy development benefits from this relationship as the council's findings are essential in helping to develop a more comprehensive portrait of seniors' needs. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, this new health advocate office will foster collaboration and integration among Alberta government ministries. This could also extend into greater collaboration potential with the federal and municipal governments and with other community partners that wish to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services to our seniors.

As we discuss Bill 208, we need to remember that our purpose here is to better connect seniors with the services that are available and with services that will be available in the future. As several government departments share responsibility for providing senior-focused services and programs, it will prove positively that the seniors' advocate within the health advocate's office will be most effective in enhancing these shared responsibilities. It would also help to offset costs by utilizing existing services and resources. This is particularly true, Mr. Speaker, in an environment of rising health care costs.

4:00

Our government is committed to seniors. Our government is proud of the work we have done so far, and we understand the work and dedication that will be necessary as we move forward. We will continue to work to improve the lives of our seniors and give them the defining value in our society they so greatly deserve. In light of the government's proposed seniors' advocate, I find Bill 208 to be unnecessary. As such, I cannot offer my support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, seniors are very dear to me; my parents are seniors, and I live with them. I echo my colleagues, and I want to congratulate the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for her work on Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act. It is an honour to rise to speak on the subject of advocacy and what it means to be an advocate, particularly in light of the announcement to create a seniors' advocate within the health advocate's office, that will be fully operational on April 11, 2014.

As we discuss Bill 208, it is important to reflect on what definitions we use for advocacy, how those definitions can determine our relationship to the kinds of advocacy we find most effective, and on the types of advocacy that are available to us. As my colleagues have also pointed out, Mr. Speaker, our seniors and their families deserve our respect and our commitment to the enhancement of their quality of life. And it is also true that we should define ourselves in relation to the value we place on what we do for our seniors and their families.

There are many definitions of advocacy, and much debate exists regarding which is the most appropriate to use. Having a definition of advocacy is necessary so that we have something to refer to, to check against, and to encourage discussion about what we are doing. At its most intuitive level an advocate can be defined as one who pleads the cause of another. To take this a step further, advocacy can also be described as promoting awareness and understanding of a cause or the ability to change public opinion and cause a shift in people's perceptions and understanding of an issue.

However, we should remember that advocacy can take a variety of forms and can involve more than one person or group. Mr. Speaker, with respect to Bill 208 I would like to highlight a particular advocacy group in Queensland, Australia, called Queensland Advocacy Incorporated. Queensland Advocacy Incorporated is a community-based advocacy group for people with disabilities. This group is particularly helpful in how they define both the types and the key elements of advocacy. In their view, the key elements of advocacy involve speaking, acting, and writing, with minimal conflict of interest, on behalf of the sincerely perceived interests of a disadvantaged person or group. According to this, advocacy is active, it involves doing something, it involves being there for someone or a group of people when they encounter a difficult situation and need strength to have their voices heard. It means possessing the unwavering will to fight for a person's right to a more fulfilling life.

Minimal conflict of interest also lies at the core of advocacy and is perhaps one of the hardest but most important issues to come to terms with. When one is in an advocacy role, they should be clear as to how their interests may be in conflict with the person for whom they are advocating. As an advocate one should be able to define and reduce conflicts of interest or at least be prepared to acknowledge their limitations as an advocate.

Mr. Speaker, being able to understand sincerely perceived interests is a complex and difficult task. Advocates do not just speak up for what a person may want or what a person may be interested in. Advocates will be faced with making decisions about an individual's life and well-being and may be the only resource in that person's life who has a positive vision for that person's future in the immediate and long term. Identifying what is in a person's interests, what they need versus what they want, can be a very difficult process.

In our discussion of Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, we would be wise to consider that an advocate's mandate is to promote and protect and defend the welfare and justice of those they advocate for. They do this by being primarily concerned with fundamental needs, and they remain loyal and accountable in a way which is emphatic and vigorous. One's advocacy efforts should be aimed at enhancing and protecting the value, the competencies, and the image of the person for whom they are advocating.

There are many important and subtle concepts in this definition that are worth our careful consideration. We should do what we can to acknowledge the sincerely perceived interests of our seniors, and we should do that in a way that avoids unnecessary

conflicts. We should find the best possible ways to protect and defend their welfare and justice. We will continue to address their fundamental needs, and we will remain loyal and accountable in ways that are both emphatic and vigorous. We will take the lead, and we will initiate progress. Beyond this, we will accept this responsibility with understanding and compassion and empathy. This is the most true when it comes to advocating on behalf of our seniors.

Our newly created seniors' advocate is now well positioned to tackle those important and complex issues. We are proud of what our government has accomplished for our seniors. Our ministries and departments co-ordinate their efforts and share their resources in ways that make the best services and programs available. This new seniors' advocate will not only extend the effectiveness of our government's capacity to address the needs of our seniors, but it will also better align with existing initiatives such as Alberta's Mental Health Patient Advocate.

Before I finish, Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly mention the different types of advocacy that exist as a way of rounding out our discussion on the defining qualities of a successful advocate. According to Queensland Advocacy there are five types of advocacy. The first is individual advocacy, which is when an advocate concentrates efforts on one or two people. The second is citizen advocacy, and this usually involves a community-based movement that aims to recognize, promote, and defend the rights, well-being, and interests of an identified group. The third is systems advocacy, which is primarily concerned with influencing and changing the system in ways that will benefit a defined group within society. The fourth is parent advocacy, which describes advocacy undertaken for a person in need and their family. The fifth and final type is self-advocacy, which is when a person or group advocates on behalf of themselves. I raise those points as a way of urging all hon. members to carefully consider the implications of what is proposed in Bill 208.

#### 4:10

As we move forward and define the type of advocacy we will practice, we should focus on building relationships, on the best means to reach and mobilize the resources within our government, and on what would serve the interests of our seniors best. We should also encourage a close dialogue between our government and the seniors' advocate and the seniors that are advocated for.

Our seniors and their families deserve no less than the best we can offer. We will put our minds and energy and commitment to that task. Our seniors have set important examples for us and serve as wonderful and wise role models for our younger generations. They have built the Alberta we know today, and we are proud of their hard work, their generosity, and their lasting legacy of a real commitment to a caring and compassionate community.

Mr. Speaker, our new seniors' advocate moves us forward in the right direction, and as such I cannot offer my support to Bill 208. However, I would like to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. With regret, your time has expired, unfortunately.

I have to go to Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Calgary-Mountain View. Then I have Calgary-Varsity, associate minister, Edmonton-Gold Bar, associate minister, and Stony Plain.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, being brought forward by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I would like to thank the hon. member for putting forth a bill that aims to positively impact our senior citizens.

To begin, I would like to acknowledge the vital role that seniors have played in our great province. Seniors have forged the path which our generation has avidly followed. It goes without saying that seniors have positively impacted the history of Alberta families and communities, and I'm proud to be a member of this Assembly, advocating for the hard-working constituents accordingly.

Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, proposes the creation of a seniors' advocate as an office of the Legislature. This, Mr. Speaker, differs from the government's current plan to establish an advocate that will consolidate into the health advocate's office. It is our duty as government members to advocate collectively not only for all our constituents but also for those requiring a higher need of due care. Bill 208 proposes to create an independent seniors' advocate, reporting directly to the Legislature.

By 2036 it is estimated that the senior population will reach upwards of 20 per cent of the total population in Alberta, meaning that about 1 in 5 Albertans will be a senior citizen. Realizing these statistics, it is imperative that this government act in such a way as to bring seniors' issues to our attention in a collective and organized manner.

In 2008 our government advocated for seniors by establishing a Demographic Planning Commission. The commission's main function was to provide analysis and research leading to proposals in preparation for our aging population. In December of 2008 the commission brought forth the Findings Report, that they created after conducting a survey with more than 10,000 Albertans and engaging in additional consultations with nearly a hundred stakeholders. The findings of the commission were used to develop an aging population policy framework, that provides strategy and goals to assist this government's decision-making and policy co-ordination. These findings, Mr. Speaker, helped to pinpoint the concerns of key stakeholders, enabling the commission to further narrow down possible issues and areas focused on our seniors. This government has done well to ensure that seniors are properly represented and advocated for.

Additionally, our annual budget consultations are directly aimed at gaining a heightened understanding of constituents' needs and issues. It is our responsibility to ensure that communication channels between ourselves and our constituents are being effectively utilized. Mr. Speaker, initiatives like the Demographic Planning Commission and our annual budget consultations surely capture our efforts to continuously and actively seek practical solutions to meet the needs of all our constituents, including our seniors that we care for and love.

This government is aware of the challenges that face our seniors, and this is why we have implemented such initiatives, so that we can better plan for their future. Bill 208 suggests there is a need for a seniors' advocate that works independently from the Minister of Health. It seems more natural that this advocate would utilize existing resources and benefit from experts' opinions already available.

It is my worry, Mr. Speaker, that by passing Bill 208, we are facilitating an additional level of bureaucracy that may hinder a member's ability to advocate for their constituents responsibly. An advocate who will be consolidated into a health advocate's office will ensure that issues surrounding policy and services are directly addressed without being lost in various levels of bureaucracy. My goal as a Member of the Legislative Assembly is to represent families and communities in my constituency as well as across Alberta. I sincerely believe that in its current form Bill 208 would hinder my ability to do that.

Many of our government's current advocate roles have strong relationships with the representative ministries and, as such, are

very effective in representing and voicing the concerns of a wide range of Albertans. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, there are many government-appointed and non government-appointed bodies that assist in the advocacy of all our constituents, including seniors.

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta is a government-appointed body that reports directly to the Minister of Health. The council's general role is to provide advice and information to the province regarding challenges posed to seniors' standard of living. Government officials are provided up-to-date front-line information on issues affecting our seniors here in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I'm not entirely convinced that in its current form and considering the resources that we currently have in place, Bill 208 is an actionable plan for this government.

Additionally, Alberta has many not-for-profit advocacy resources and programs, including but not limited to the Elder Advocates of Alberta Society, Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association, the Edmonton seniors' activity centres, and Seniors United Now. Constituents are being heard, Mr. Speaker, and it is our job to streamline existing services and prevent duplication, as is accomplished by consolidating the Ministry of Seniors with Health.

Additionally, the government of Alberta has proclaimed the Alberta Health Act, which confirms the principles of the Alberta health care system and calls for the creation of an advocate to help people navigate the health care system.

The health advocate's office will assist Albertans in navigating the health care system and will contain three advocates: the health advocate, the seniors' advocate, and the existing Mental Health Patient Advocate. Mr. Speaker, every day approximately 105 Albertans turn 65, and our government is preparing for this. I myself will be nearing that age pretty soon. Having a health advocate's office is incredibly important to help Albertans navigate the health system and address their concerns.

I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate on Bill 208 and will continue to advocate on behalf of the seniors not only in my constituency but in the province. I commend the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for her work on this bill, but I'm concerned about how this would impact our seniors. I know that the member does care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Let us move on to Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. I think this is an important issue, and I don't think there is anything that I receive more expressions of concern about than seniors' care in this province. Certainly, I have a growing list of what people describe as failures in seniors' care. Frankly, it's overdue that we get on and deal with this issue in a very comprehensive and transparent and accountable way, and I think all of us would benefit from that.

The Alberta Liberals have been calling for an independent resource to monitor and enforce standards in nursing homes and seniors' care centres for many years. If there's anything that would restore confidence and, I guess, quality, I would have to say that it's an independent advocate along with a body that establishes intermittent but consistent monitoring of seniors' care centres both for quality of care in terms of their staffing numbers and staffing qualifications and for quantity of service such as we've heard so often around the whole personal care issues; once-a-week bathing, as an example.

**4:20**

There is so much that we could be doing for seniors. It flies in the face of, I guess, what the government is talking about so often in terms of simply beefing up their inspections or putting the right people in the right place and ensuring that we expand the scope of practice of LPNs and care aides. What is needed, though, is that behind the talk there needs to be enforcement. There needs to be some ability to say: "This is the condition in this particular institution. These are the standards. These standards are not being met, and this is the action that will result from that failure to meet a standard." That would restore both the confidence of the public at large and the constituents in these settings and give confidence also and hope to the many front-line workers who are battling tremendous odds in terms of numbers of cases they're expected to care for, the increased complexity of these cases, and, frankly, the reduced qualifications of people caring for these people and the reduced staff-to-patient ratio, especially in some of the private institutions, as we've heard from the Parkland report.

This inconsistency, I guess, of standards in care could in part be addressed by an advocate but, again, an independent advocate. It doesn't make sense to me to go through the same process yet again that we went through with the child advocate, first setting up an advocate that reports to the minister and then, finally, under duress, under pressure, under continual barrage that the child services system wasn't adequate, they finally just a couple of years ago made the child advocate independent.

Now, I know that the government has taken that over and that this Bill 208 may be seen as redundant at this time. But it's not redundant in the sense that they could take two leaps, not only setting up the seniors' advocate but making it independent of the minister so that all Albertans, especially the Legislature, could have confidence that it is having that independent voice that's needed to challenge what's happening both within the ministry and out there in the field.

It's all about trust, Mr. Speaker. I know this government wants to build trust. I know it wants to build confidence. I know it wants to build credibility. This is a way that you really could do that with a minor change to the bill that the government is proposing, an endorsement of this very reasonable suggestion.

That's all I have to say, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the honour of speaking.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation.

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased to speak to Bill 208, Seniors' Advocate Act. The idea of creating an independent advocate is actually really compelling. I must tell the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake that I gave this proposal an awful lot of consideration. I think it's really good for us all to reflect on how we do what we do in government. So asking all of us to think more about this, an issue that comes into every single one of our offices – and my office, in particular, in Calgary-Varsity sees a lot of questions about seniors' full spectrum of issues, to the point that we have decided in our constituency of Calgary-Varsity that this is one of the top five challenges that we want to tackle as a constituency. We work with partners and communities and try to identify how we can respond to these issues. So the question of creating an independent body merits consideration.

In addition to the comments shared by lots of other MLAs today in this Legislature, I just want to build on some of the thinking that we've seen. Mentioned already is an aging population policy

framework. The government of Alberta went out to Albertans in a very significant way as early as 2008 and, obviously, since and asked: what are the key issues with seniors that we want to be looking after, making sure that we as the government of Alberta work on engaging other governments, engaging families, engaging municipalities, engaging the not-for-profit sector and communities? The three priorities that they set out I think are actually still very powerful priorities.

One was to make sure that we have consistent, province-wide policy directions about seniors and an aging population. I come from the city of Calgary, where the needs probably are very different than for some of my colleagues who live in more remote jurisdictions. The idea of having consistency and province-wide policy directions and making sure that we have the resources available to make sure we can deliver on these policies in an efficient way: I think that is the role of government, to lead. The idea of consolidating a seniors' advocate within the health advocate's office seems to be consistent with that vision.

The second role that the framework advanced and said was an absolute imperative was for government to create the conditions for collaboration, as I mentioned, among citizens, among families, communities, and governments. No one group can resolve this issue on their own. I'm a big fan of that, and I see that in action in my constituency all the time. We have amazing community associations, active aging coalitions that bring together seniors and citizens. They work with government, and when there is an issue or an opportunity, there is collaboration.

The third theme of the framework was to make sure that supports and services to Alberta seniors are provided. Some of these programs are provided by the government directly, and some are provided through community partners on behalf of government. Notwithstanding, the government is responsible for the effectiveness and the efficiency of these programs, and we must be.

It's also our responsibility to make sure that we have standards and mechanisms in place to protect seniors in a variety of circumstances. One of the things I have observed in our government and that I'm pleased by is the ability of ministries to increasingly have the agility to work across ministries. The Ministry of Health works with Health Services, works with Justice, works with Finance, works with Municipal Affairs, works with Aboriginal Relations. Most of these issues faced by seniors, the ones that we can't get to really quickly, are complex, and they need a multidisciplinary approach. That kind of collaboration, again, with communities and with families is hard to do sometimes, but it's absolutely essential.

A couple of other things I want to flag from the framework that I see in my office all the time are financial resources. A lot of people come into our office and say that they're concerned about whether or not they will have adequate access to financial resources in their senior years. I understand why people would have that concern. My own grandparents had that concern. As government, particularly the Associate Minister of Seniors, we're developing and tailoring programs that look at these issues, making sure that families of seniors and the seniors themselves have an informed understanding of issues that affect their future financial needs when they become seniors and as they are seniors.

We've also developed affordable housing and supportive living units, especially in remote and rural areas, through the ASLI program. There are 982 new affordable supportive living spaces receiving over \$72 million in funding from the Alberta government. I've had lots of questions about how we get more seniors' buildings in the constituency where I live, which is sort of almost

now an inner-city constituency in the city of Calgary. I know my colleague in Calgary-Hawkwood is asked the same questions. We truly do want to create choices for seniors so that they can continue to live in the communities where they grew up and raised their families.

4:30

I want to talk a little bit about continuing care services and support for seniors who are able to live independently and also about increasing demands for continuing care services. These questions need to be included in our debate of Bill 208, and I welcome that debate. The government of Alberta has been working with communities' co-ordinated access policies to make sure that we can reduce the barriers for seniors who want to live in the community. We've got pilot projects operating to support seniors' independence, the emergency-to-home pilot project, and the neighbours helping neighbours initiative.

Of course, seniors' independence means we cannot ignore the prevention of elder abuse and neglect. Yes, sadly, there is a need for us to raise awareness of elder abuse and to adequately respond to this horror. Communities and governments and citizens are coming together to tackle this challenge, and we need to keep this issue in our mind, at the very fore of our mind.

I just want to conclude by saying that I was very tempted to support this. The idea of having an independent seniors' advocate is compelling. But I truly believe that looking after seniors and making sure that we respond to their needs is a first priority for this government. As a member of this government I will commit to doing everything possible to make sure that our government uses its resources to support seniors, to listen to their needs, to respond to their needs, and I sincerely believe that the best place to do that is from within government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, being brought forward by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. The Seniors' Advocate Act proposes to create a seniors' advocate, who would be an independent officer of the Legislature.

As many of us can attest to, seniors helped shape our great province, making it what it is today. Our seniors helped build strong foundations in our province, making Alberta the strong economic engine it is today. Our veterans fought for the freedoms we are blessed with, and for that we cannot thank them enough.

Alberta's seniors population is growing. As of January 2012 there were approximately 425,000 seniors in our province. By 2036 it is estimated that Alberta's seniors population will stand at over 1 million, or 1 in 5 Albertans. Given our growing seniors population, it is imperative that we prepare for the challenges that may arise between now and then, and that is exactly what our government is doing, and that is why our government is establishing a health advocate office, one that will include a seniors' advocate.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a long-standing history of implementing programs and policies that promote a high standard of living for all Albertans, including seniors. For instance, \$358 million has been allocated to fund the Alberta seniors' benefit for the 2013-2014 fiscal year, the highest of any province or territory in the country. The Alberta seniors' benefit helps vulnerable seniors supplement their incomes in order to maintain a high

standard of living. This is an increase of nearly \$22 million from the previous year.

Recently the seniors' property tax deferral program was announced, which enables eligible homeowners to defer all or part of their property taxes through a low-interest home equity loan with the government of Alberta. Just this past year \$67 million in grants were made to municipalities, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and private-sector organizations province-wide in order to assist in the development of 665 new or upgraded affordable supportive living spaces as well as 30 additional long-term care spaces.

Debating Bill 208 allows members of this House to highlight our government's proven history of implementing effective policies that enable our seniors to lead healthy and dignified lives. In 2010 our government commissioned the Aging Population Policy Framework report, which articulated and defined the government of Alberta's key initiatives, defining principles that continue to help shape the lives of seniors in our province. This helped our government to hone in on systemic issues affecting our seniors and allowed us to foster a collaborative, interministerial environment to better develop seniors' supports and services.

Understanding the complexity of seniors' needs, our Premier tasked the hon. Associate Minister of Seniors with the mandate of establishing a seniors' advocate. However, unlike the one proposed in Bill 208, the advocate will be consolidated into the health advocate's office along with the Mental Health Patient Advocate, working collaboratively in order to tackle policy oversights in seniors' care. This, Mr. Speaker, makes sense since many of the issues that surround seniors concern their health. Alberta's first seniors' advocate would primarily focus efforts on addressing seniors' issues in the most effective manner by working with resources that are already available. This would avoid duplication, streamline administration, and ensure efficiency by drawing from existing resources.

On February 20, 2013, the Seniors Advocate Act was introduced in the British Columbia Legislature. That act was passed and received royal assent on March 14, 2013. Similar to the role brought forward by our government and, again, unlike the one proposed by Bill 208, the seniors' advocate for B.C. reports to the Minister of Health. Of course, B.C.'s decision to create a seniors' advocate who reports to the ministry was done after an extensive consultation process.

Before B.C.'s act was introduced, the B.C. government conducted 10 public consultations aimed at narrowing down several possible responsibilities that could shape the role of the seniors' advocate. These consultations involved key representatives from the seniors community, who provided invaluable input for the final vision of B.C.'s seniors' advocate, not to mention the needed co-operation, accountability, and transparency necessary for a successful initiative. Seniors, their families, caregivers, and other key stakeholders from across the province of B.C. provided ideas and feedback, helping to create an advocate that would address seniors' needs in the most efficient and compassionate manner possible.

After the consultation process ended, B.C. concluded that the advocate's overarching role would be to monitor seniors' services, raise and promote awareness on seniors' issues, and collaborate with seniors, policy-makers, and service providers regarding policies that affect them. The advocate would also focus on tackling roadblocks in governmental policy that may prevent seniors from attaining the care that they seek. Additionally, these consultations concluded that B.C.'s seniors' advocate role would involve providing seniors with up-to-date information and advice pertaining to the services and resources that are available to them.

In terms of support, participants expressed the need for having an advocate who would address the complaints of seniors regarding, for instance, suspected elder abuse. The role would also involve a high degree of collaboration such as being able to communicate with and engage advocacy groups from a number of sectors in order to establish the highest level of seniors' supports. Like our neighbours to the west, our government has also taken such concerns into account. The findings that were highlighted in B.C.'s consultations are being highlighted today in order to identify practices that would make our advocate a powerful voice for all seniors in Alberta.

Unlike Bill 208 proposes, Alberta's first seniors' advocate would better address seniors' issues, especially health issues, if the role was consolidated in the health advocate's office. Mr. Speaker, let us utilize the resources that our province already has and build on them rather than re-creating the proverbial wheel and, moreover, duplicating roles. Most importantly, let all members of the House continue to serve our seniors and advocate on their behalf.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for bringing this bill before the House for debate, but given that our government had the foresight to implement a seniors' advocate role that works collaboratively with the government in order to reduce red tape and streamline services, I cannot support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the Associate Minister of International and Inter-governmental Relations, followed by Stony Plain: hon. members, that is the list that I have. I don't know if we'll get them all in by 5 o'clock, but let's try.

4:40

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to, in standing to speak regarding this bill, give an acknowledgement to all the advocacy groups in Edmonton and around the province that work with seniors. I also want to mention that the rural seniors don't always have these advocates close by, so this is something of a concern that I have. I hope that we can address those kinds of issues as we move forward. Also, I wanted to acknowledge the seniors in Edmonton-Gold Bar. We have a significant number of seniors. In four years I will add my name to the list, so I need to disclose that I'm getting close, closer every day.

I'm pleased to rise today to join my hon. colleagues in the debate on Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Before I begin, I, like others, would like to thank the hon. member for bringing this bill forward in the House today. We have the opportunity to discuss these issues and to let seniors in the whole province know that we do care about them, that we do have some genuine concerns for their care, and we appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to speak to these concerns at this time.

Seniors' concerns have always been and always will be of great importance to me and, from what I've seen, to this government. According to recent G-8 statistics Canada remains relatively young, Mr. Speaker, in comparison to other countries in the world. However, having a relatively young population should not preclude Canada or Alberta from providing the best services possible to our seniors. In order to provide the best services possible to seniors, it's important to examine guiding principles from other countries or international organizations and how they may contribute to our discussion.

Therefore, the area that I chose to have a researcher work on is the set of standards, of principles, in the United Nations' guiding

principles. The United Nations principles for older persons were adopted by the United Nations in 1991, and these principles call on governments to, when possible, incorporate five guiding principles in terms of policy and strategic planning. Mr. Speaker, it's these five guiding principles that I certainly hope and have been assured since that time by the minister that they have been taken into account as this minister has been working on it and will continue to work in this area.

The first principle, Mr. Speaker, is independence. This principle states that older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, and health care through the provision of income, family and community support, and, of course, self-help. This principle also states that older persons should have the opportunity to work for or to have access to other income-generating opportunities of their choosing. Lastly, this principle mentions that older persons should be able to determine the pace at which they withdraw from the labour market, have access to training and educational programs, and be able to live in safe environments that meet their challenging needs while also residing at home for as long as they choose. That's really important to the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The second principle is participation. I've asked our seniors to be involved in our communities, particularly on boards of community leagues, and to be participants in the decisions that get made in the 13 community leagues in Edmonton-Gold Bar. This principle puts a strong emphasis on the need to keep older persons integrated within society, including actively participating in policies that impact their well-being. Additionally, seniors should be given the opportunity to contribute to society by participating in community volunteer ventures and community services, as I've mentioned.

The third principle that may contribute to shaping our discussion of Bill 208 – and it hopefully will – is care. Seniors need to benefit from family and community care based on societal values, including access to health care, in order to maintain or regain emotional, physical, and mental health. Seniors should also have access to social and legal services in order to retain or enhance their autonomy as well as adequate levels of institutional care for providing protection, rehabilitation, social and mental stimulation.

As an aside, Mr. Speaker, I believe that mental stimulation is done a lot by computers, and I always encourage seniors to get involved in the many wonderful things that are available now on computers to stimulate their minds and to challenge them and to keep them active.

Seniors should be able to enjoy fundamental freedoms and human rights when residing in any shelter, care, or treatment facilities, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs, and privacy. This is what Alberta seniors ask for, that's what Edmonton-Gold Bar seniors ask for, and that's what they certainly deserve. As hon. members of this Assembly we should be working with them to achieve this, working together and finding constructive ways to do this, Mr. Senior. [interjections] Mr. Senior Speaker.

The UN's fourth principle is self-fulfillment. Self-fulfillment involves ensuring seniors have the ability to fully develop their potential through various opportunities. We should ensure that our seniors have the necessary access to the resources they seek out. All of our efforts should be geared towards ensuring seniors can continue to live an active and healthy lifestyle of their choosing.

The fifth and final principle in the United Nations principles for older persons is dignity. This principle states that seniors should be able to live with dignity and security, which includes the absence of exploitation and physical or mental abuse. Older people "should be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial or

ethnic background, disability or other status" – any other one, Mr. Speaker – "and be valued independently of their economic contribution." Elder abuse has devastating consequences. It jeopardizes the health and well-being of seniors and undermines one's sense of security, independence, and dignity. Seniors deserve to be treated with dignity and respect just as all citizens do.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments on the definition of advocacy – the word "advocacy" is an important one – and how the United Nations principles for older persons and its five main principles could influence the future of our advocacy efforts. In 2009 the government released a bulletin defining advocacy as "promoting awareness and understanding of a cause or the ability to change public opinion, and cause a shift in people's perceptions or understanding of an issue." In relation to the government's definition of advocacy any of the principles of the United Nations principles for older persons would be beneficial in shaping the role of a seniors' advocate or any other program offered to seniors.

For example, we should adhere to the independence principle, which states, "Older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter," as I've mentioned. In fact, the government currently provides an Alberta seniors' benefit, a monthly cash benefit for more than 140,000 low-income seniors, which was included in the 2013-14 budget at \$358 million, the highest of any province or territory. Mr. Speaker, I've sat with many seniors and helped them fill out those applications. This benefit helps low-income seniors acquire basic and essential needs such as food and medicine in order to experience a better quality of life.

In addition, the dental and optical assistance for seniors program helps over 210,000 low- to moderate-income seniors with basic dental and optical needs. Our government's seniors' activity tax credit helps senior to stay alive and aligns well with the self-fulfillment principle, that states, "Older persons should have access to the . . . recreational resources of society."

Budgeted at almost \$23 million, the special-needs assistance program serves 23,000 seniors and provides lump-sum cash payments to offset costs for home-related expenses such as home appliances and repairs. This program also matches the self-fulfillment section of the United Nations principles for older persons, which states that seniors should have the ability to develop to their full potential.

The government's elder abuse awareness program provides information regarding senior abuse, which is defined as any action or inaction that jeopardizes a senior's health or well-being, whether that be emotional, financial, psychological; neglect; or sexual abuse, Mr. Speaker. The elder abuse awareness program confirms the dignity principle.

The numerous programs available illustrate this government's commitment to seniors. The proof is going to be in the pudding. I trust that the minister is doing the right thing. In addition, this government is establishing that health advocate office to provide additional services to Albertans and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

4:50

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and speak to Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. The hon. members of this House know how important seniors are to our families and communities. Actually, there's a Chinese saying, something to the effect that seniors are considered treasures in our

families and communities. They are our parents, brothers, sisters, and grandparents, and we all know how much they support and provide wisdom to our families over the years.

Our government recognizes that seniors may need a little help from time to time, and that's why programs have been implemented that foster healthy living and sustainable support mechanisms. For instance, seniors can now choose how they want to pay their property taxes with the seniors' property tax deferral program. Seniors with limited income can also apply for the Alberta seniors' benefit program, which provides additional support to federal benefits acquired under old age security, guaranteed income supplement, federal allowance, and the GST credit. Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of the many important programs our government has spearheaded to help our seniors attain the services they need in order to lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

Just as Bill 208 implies, our government also understands the need for a seniors' advocate, one who would provide seniors with a strong and committed voice, one that would help seniors acquire the services they seek. This is why our government is establishing a seniors' advocate, who will work in collaboration with the health advocate's office. A seniors' advocate that works closely with the health advocate seems natural since many of the services that seniors seek are health related. This is why \$405 million was allocated to seniors' services and benefits.

Again, I believe that a seniors' advocate who works in conjunction with the health advocate's office within the Health ministry would be better poised to take on the challenges facing seniors today. The underlying premise of Bill 208 seems to question the viability of this; however, there are several other advocate roles that do report to a minister and, as many individuals in our province can attest, these important roles are extremely effective in tackling many systemic issues.

The Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate is a significant role that reports directly to the Minister of Health as mandated under part 6 of the Alberta Mental Health Act. In addition to the advocate's main responsibility to provide assistance to patients, other important duties include providing policy-makers with expert knowledge on key issues affecting mental health in our province. Other advocacy work revolves around educating members of the public, clients who utilize mental health services, health professionals, and community organizations.

When an individual seeks the advice or the services of the Mental Health Patient Advocate, the office provides individuals with an assigned advocate who can provide information or help resolve complaints. The patient advocate may conduct independent, formal investigations in order to make sound recommendations to the provincial health board in relation to the complaint. Maintaining strong mental health services is an initiative that our government takes very seriously and one that requires dedicated individuals.

Like the seniors' advocate that is being proposed by the ministry and unlike Bill 208's proposed advocate, the Mental Health Patient Advocate is an excellent example of when an advocate can act independently and work collaboratively with the ministry. During the 2011-12 fiscal year 9,714 cases were handled either through personal interaction, over the telephone, or through written contact. According to recent figures a resounding 91 per cent of clients who received services from the Mental Health Patient Advocate's office stated that they would recommend the service to someone else. So, Mr. Speaker, one could note that the success of the advocate's office is very much linked to a strong relationship with the ministry.

I would also like to point out that recently British Columbia passed its own Seniors Advocate Act, which received royal assent on March 14, 2013. In a news release the government of British Columbia stated that the seniors' advocate role would be to "promote awareness, work collaboratively with seniors, families, policymakers, service providers and others to identify solutions to systemic issues" with the hopes of eliminating policy gaps that affect seniors. Similar to the seniors' advocate our government plans to implement, British Columbia's seniors' advocate role also acts in an independent manner but reports to the Minister of Health. This decision was made after a number of public consultations between B.C.'s seniors action plan team, seniors, families, and concerned stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, our government will always advocate for seniors across our province and will continue to provide the support they need the most so that they are able to achieve the high quality of life that our province is known for. I commend the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for her work on this bill, but we must build on the policies and achievements that have been made, so I won't be supporting the bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Mr. Lemke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to join my hon. colleagues in the debate on Bill 208, the Seniors' Advocate Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing forward this bill in the House today.

Mr. Speaker, our government implements innovative solutions to issues that affect our seniors population, which is growing, and that is why our government has developed certain frameworks and bodies in order to best respond to the current and future needs of Alberta's seniors population. The Demographic Planning Commission was established as part of our government's mandate to better address the needs of our seniors. It is important to examine the work of the Demographic Planning Commission as it will provide valuable guidance in shaping Alberta's first seniors' advocate.

The Demographic Planning Commission was established in 2008 in response to projections that our province's seniors population would reach upwards of 20 per cent of the total population by the year 2036. Mr. Speaker, this means that by 2036 around 1 in 5 Albertans will be considered seniors. The commission's primary function was to provide analysis and research which would lead to proposals in preparation for an aging population.

The findings of the commission ultimately led to the aging population policy framework. In December 2008 the commission tabled a Findings Report, which was the result of a five-day consultation process with over a hundred stakeholders across the province in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Grande Prairie. The Findings Report also took into account an online survey, which saw over 10,000 Albertans participate.

Several policy themes emerged from the report, and I believe these themes will be useful when considering Bill 208. The first theme focused on finding ways that would help to enable citizens and seniors to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Over 90 per cent of survey respondents agreed with the statement: I want to live in my own home during my senior years. This is what Alberta seniors want and deserve, and our government is dedicated to helping them achieve it through a variety of programs, one being the seniors' property tax deferral program,



which allows homeowners 65 and older to defer part of their residential property taxes.

The commission noted that participants emphasized the difficulty in securing affordable housing for seniors, especially those with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, that is why our government has budgeted over \$23 million for the special-needs assistance program, offering over 23,000 seniors lump-sum cash payments to offset costs for home-related expenses.

The commission also heard from participants regarding the role of the private sector in creating more social housing, including how the private sector will be a positive factor in influencing building trends as they will adapt to the growing markets in Alberta. Governments across the country need to plan now in order to guarantee that an adequate number of seniors' residences are built.

As an example, our government in consultation with the federal government is working to expand the Bow River lodge in Canmore. The project will see 43 units renovated into 27 units in order to make them accessible, an additional 31 new units, and increased amenities . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I regret having to interrupt you, but the time for this particular section has now elapsed, and we must move on to other business.

#### 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

#### Renewable and Alternative Energy Technology

518. Ms Calahasen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to develop and implement a program encouraging Albertans to invest in and make use of renewable and alternative energy technologies in the province in order to strengthen Alberta's leadership in energy innovation and greenhouse gas reductions.

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and open debate on Motion 518. I'm proposing this motion in order to reinforce our province's leadership in reducing greenhouse gases, energy modernization, and to get Albertans to see and use alternative energy technologies.

Motion 518 is not to replace nonrenewable energy but to work in concert with that so that we can see as a province that we will actively continue to combat climate change and encourage greenhouse gas reduction through investing in and making use of renewable and alternative energy. Renewable energy, or renewables, is defined as any naturally occurring, theoretically inexhaustible source of energy such as geothermal, biomass, solar, wind, tidal, wave, hydroelectric power which is not derived from fossil or nuclear fuel.

Alberta has a wealth of renewable biomass feedstock in the forestry and agriculture sector that will drive considerable production of low-carbon transportation fuels and power generation. As an example, many forest industries in my constituency also are bringing great and innovative ideas to be part of this solution. In fact, with support from the Alberta government West Fraser Mills Limited will turn waste from its Slave Lake pulp mill into electricity, increasing the plant's energy efficiency and reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

The West Fraser biogas project, which received \$10 million in provincial funding, is expected to produce enough green energy to allow the company to draw seven fewer megawatts from the

electricity grid annually to operate its mill and reduce its natural gas use by more than 164 gigajoules annually.

In addition, Vanderwell Contractors operates a wood pellet facility in my constituency. These wood pellets are extremely dense and can be produced with a low moisture content, below 10 per cent, that allows them to be burned with a very high combustion efficiency.

Renewable energy's viability is improving, and innovation in this sector is constantly evolving, which means that it has the potential to become a significant part of the global energy mix this century. Alberta's development in the use of renewables will continue to raise our province's profile as a leader in environmental stewardship with regard to greenhouse gases. Alberta's diverse energy supply stimulates regional activity and fortifies collaboration across multiple industries.

An additional and very real category of energy that must be mentioned is saved energy. Unconsumed energy can be used productively elsewhere. Energy savings contribute to ensuring an adequate and efficient supply for Albertans while at the same time reducing incremental emissions.

Alberta has the highest per capita energy use on the planet. However, our province also has nearly three times the national average of electricity generation from wind power. In fact, Mr. Speaker, our government has implemented numerous types of renewable electricity generation in its current mix. As of June 2013 the energy capacity from renewable and alternative electricity sources includes 900 megawatts of hydro power, 1,113 megawatts of wind power, and 414 megawatts of biomass power.

Our government also has a history of supporting alternative and renewable energy programs, including the Alberta energy efficiency rebate program. From 2009 until 2012 the Alberta energy efficiency rebate program issued more than 173,000 rebates totalling over \$49 million to Albertans who purchased energy-efficient upgrades; 46,157 rebates worth \$100 each were given to individuals who invested in energy-efficient clothes washers while 2,969 rebates worth \$250 to \$300 each were given to homeowners who upgraded their furnaces.

One alternative energy source that the government is currently investing in is biofuels. Bioenergy is derived from biomass, which is material made from living organisms. In terms of our environmental benefits the most significant advantage is that biofuels are a renewable feedstock, part of the carbon cycle. The production of plant material pulls carbon from the atmosphere, and then this carbon is returned when the fuel is burned.

As of June 2011 Alberta has one ethanol-producing facility and one biodiesel-producing facility. Moreover, biofuel production capacity in Alberta has reached 40 million litres of ethanol and 19 million litres of biodiesel. Mr. Speaker, Motion 518 is meant to reinforce the province's leadership in greenhouse gas reduction and energy innovation and give Albertans alternative sources of energy to use.

This government has been and always will be committed to investing in renewable resource technologies in order to forge ahead on responsible energy innovation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Once again, Motion 518's goal is to encourage the government to develop and implement a program encouraging Albertans to invest in and make use of renewable alternative energy technologies.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members, including all the people who have been against any reality of climate change, to support Motion 518.

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

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support this bill from the hon. member – sorry; this motion. It could have been a bill. The government could have sponsored a bill, but it is a motion. It's a motion that, once passed, has a lot of value, particularly if the ministry is on board to promote this and establish a foothold on dealing with renewable energy.

Now, one of the most significant aspects of creating what I'm going to call a road map in paving the way for renewable energy is the benefits that it can achieve in greenhouse gas reduction. This helps our existing industries significantly, who have a vested interest in making sure that there is a measurable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

The other aspect is that most renewable energies, not all but most, have a value where we're able to reduce the cost of electricity, particularly over the long term.

I support the motion. I ask my colleagues to support the motion. But, most importantly, I ask the ministry to pay attention to what it's going to take to advance renewable energy and how we're going to measure the outcome of renewable energy to make sure it is doing what we want it to do. Again, this is realistically performance based.

With that, I want to bring one point forward where I think the ministry has failed, where it needs to address a particular issue with regard to renewable energy, and that is to deal with microgeneration. Microgeneration has been in this province for quite some time, and it is a viable part of the whole motion for renewable energy. Microgenerators in this province have struck agreements to purchase electricity and in some cases to purchase electricity for as much as 15 cents a kilowatt hour. Now, they would say that that is their all-in delivery rate that gets normally charged to all consumers.

Madam Speaker, what these private companies are doing is using the existing regulations and the framework that has already been created by our own Department of Energy. What they have done is that they have looked at the market and made a determination that a homeowner can put solar panels on their house, and these retailers have offered to purchase that electricity for as much as 15 cents a kilowatt hour based on what they have determined is the local distribution facility owner price for all-in delivery charges. Now, they signed numerous contracts; unfortunately, as of August 1, this ministry, this government under the Alberta Utilities Commission cancelled all the contracts with one stroke of the pen.

I don't mean to pick on the ministry, but I have to pick on the ministry because I have a letter that was sent December 2 from the ministry, where the minister is saying that "retailers can also compensate a micro-generator at a higher rate than they charge the micro-generator for consuming electricity," and it says that the AESO will only repay the retailer at the same rate that the microgenerator sells electricity. That's actually wrong. That's not what the regulation says. What the regulation says – and it's under section 7.5 of the regulation – is that "unless a micro-generator and a retailer agree in writing to different compensation, a micro-generator's retailer shall credit the micro-generator for [electricity] supplied out of the micro-generator's site at the following rates." Then it says that in the case of a small microgenerator, that would be the retail rate.

5:10

So the regulations allow a microgenerator to agree to different compensation as long as it is in writing. That's what these contracts were. What these private business owners realized was

that they could pay the all-in delivery charge. That actually made sense because when a generator is generating electricity and selling into the grid, electricity is not being delivered to them.

Unfortunately, without notice, without warning many of these companies found that not only were their contracts invalid but the homeowners who invested based on these contracts found themselves now at a disadvantage and in some cases an economic loss. That's unfortunate. That should never have happened. Even if this government was going to change the regulations or interpret them differently – it has not changed the regulations – what they should have done is at least given notice to these people who had existing contracts and even grandfather them in before they change the regulations.

What we're dealing with here is that the government has not changed the regulations. These companies should be able to contract according to the regulations, and they're not being allowed to. That's wrong. If any amendments or changes need to be made to those regulations, they should allow any company to purchase electricity for the all-in delivery charge, whatever that might be, because that only seems fair.

In the example I just presented to this House, these private companies were purchasing electricity for 15 cents a kilowatt hour, and now they've been told that they cannot purchase it for that price. Now, the company Enmax, who is doing this also, is charging customers an all-in delivery charge, and they're purchasing electricity for the price that they sell electricity for, which is 6 cents a kilowatt hour. That leaves an 8-cent differential. We won't call it an electricity bubble, but it's still a differential. What they're doing is that they're charging for delivering a service that they're not delivering, and that's fundamentally wrong. I would call that gaming the system. The ministry needs to look at that because in advancing this motion on microgeneration, we shouldn't allow anyone to prevent or deter investment in renewables. I brought an example dealing strictly with microgeneration, but it makes sense even dealing with all the renewables that people would want to bring and put onto the grid.

Clearly, what we have here is a disconnect between the regulating bodies, which are two: the Alberta Utilities Commission and the AESO. They need to be directed by the ministry, or the regulations need to be changed so that they are directed so that we have paved the way so that private investors can invest in renewable energies and can get them connected to the grid.

This is a good motion. It is a step in the right direction. Hopefully, the ministry is paying attention and will at least read the *Hansard* so they can look at the example I brought. There are many, many more examples dealing with wind power and other renewable generators that need to be addressed so the rules are clear, concise, and are an incentive so that the private sector will invest in renewable energy. I think this province can make tremendous gains if they allow that.

With that, thank you for much, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Little Bow and Edmonton-South West, then Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to join the debate on Motion 518, proposed by the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake. The motion urges government to be innovative in its approach to help develop and implement a program encouraging Albertans to invest in and make use of renewable and alternative energy technologies in the province.

Madam Speaker, Alberta is a global leader in energy innovations and responsible development. The energy sector is very important to the well-being of all Albertans. We have often considered energy development before energy efficiency and conservation.

One of the main challenges Albertans face today is the use of energy resources. In order for us to remain a global energy leader, we must recognize the versatility of the energy market and develop our energy resources strategically.

Madam Speaker, on December 11, 2008, the provincial energy strategy was announced. This strategy charts the course of Alberta's future in energy. While development of clean hydrocarbons is essential to Albertans' energy future, alternative renewable energy resources play an increasingly important role. We should also consider the cumulative environmental impact such as greenhouse gas emissions and impacts to land, air, and water. As outlined in the strategy, Alberta's energy vision is to sustain long prosperity. This means that the government must take responsible action towards long-term energy development and sustainability.

Although our fossil fuel supply remains plentiful, we must remain prudent energy producers. By exercising our resourcefulness and responsibility, we can achieve the desired outcome outlined by the provincial energy strategy. The aims of the provincial strategy include clean energy production, wise energy use, and sustained economic prosperity.

Alberta's renewable energy sector can be a key player in the provincial energy future. Alberta has almost three times the national average of electricity generation capacity from wind power. In 2012 the province's wind power generation capacity hit 1,116 megawatts, broke the 1,000 megawatts mark for the first time in our history. In terms of wind turbines the Canadian Wind Energy Association estimates that there are 752 wind turbines in Alberta divided among 34 different projects. Our province is indeed one of the leaders in responsible energy development. In addition to that, our province produces biofuels from plant fibre and forest waste products.

Madam Speaker, however, there are many challenges faced by the growth of renewable energy. Our government recognizes that expanding clean energy production is a long-term process. The provincial energy strategy would ensure that steps are taken towards achieving this long-term goal.

Madam Speaker, while policies and regulations should focus on producing a renewable energy supply, we cannot ignore the demand side of the sector here. Albertans are among the highest per capita energy consumers in the world. Adopting efficiency in energy use and emphasizing the conservation of energy resources by Albertans could provide the potential to create more wealth. This could be done by raising awareness about the costs and benefits of energy consumption. Also, our government can provide support through planning, technology, and education to the public. In addition, the provincial energy strategy also emphasizes Alberta's resolution to manage the cumulative environmental effect. Our province aspires to be the world leader in energy innovation and responsible energy production.

Madam Speaker, we are blessed with abundant energy resources in Alberta, where these are essential to our living standard and future prosperity. While we deal with our success in energy development, we cannot forget the environmental consequences of our goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for bringing forward Motion 518, as it urges government to continue its leadership in energy innovation and greenhouse gas reduction. I'm

happy to support Motion 518 and encourage everyone to continue the discussion of this very important subject.

With that, I conclude my comments and look forward to the rest of the debate. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:20

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Strathmore-Brooks, then Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Hale:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will rise and speak in favour of Motion 518 today. I do have a couple of questions with some of the wording mentioned: "to develop and implement a program." I'm just kind of wondering what type of program this will be. Is it an educational program, a financial program? It's pretty broad. But I think she's going down the right path in bringing this motion forward to ensure that it's not just the large companies that are reducing their greenhouse gases and putting in technical procedures to help that. It's nice to see now that we'll be going on a more personal level. I know there were programs before where, you know, there were special appliances you could buy to reduce your environmental footprint, which is good. I'm hoping that more of these programs will be put into place.

We can do so much as people in this province, not necessarily just the big companies. I think we all have to take an active role in protecting our environment in our own homes, in our own businesses. You know, coming from a ranching background and owning a ranch, I know how important it is to ensure that we look after our water and our land and our air. There are so many things we can do just on a personal level to help out the environment. If the government accepts this motion, which I'm sure they would – I can't see why they wouldn't – they can look at ways to ensure that homeowners and average, everyday Albertans are doing what they can to reduce our footprint.

I do have a little bit of concern. I know through the Energy ministry and their bioenergy grant program we saw in the last few years that there are still some outstanding reports that we're waiting on. I brought it up in estimates this spring, and then I also did question the Energy ministry in Public Accounts last spring. We just finished another questioning with the Energy department on the bio-energy grants. There are still three of six companies that haven't fulfilled their requirements through that grant.

So I'm hoping that as they go forward, they'll be a little bit more diligent in giving out these grants and ensuring that the companies are actually fulfilling their requirements. I know that they did hire a third-party accounting firm to go in and audit these companies to ensure that they are spending the money properly and fulfilling their requirements, not only on the money side of it, the dollar figure, but on the greenhouse gases, too, that they are actually using that money to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I know the Energy ministry does have some work to do. They assured me that, you know, they're going to be making sure that these companies are fulfilling their obligations. I guess as we go forward, the Auditor and everybody else will be watching to make sure that they do that. I think it's a good step in helping the province, in helping everybody to maybe be more aware of what they can do personally, on a personal level, what you can do in your own homes. It's something that, as the province continues to grow and industry continues to grow, we have to just ensure that we take a good look at and do everything that we can to help our environment.

We've seen some instances on the news with big companies lately, you know, spilling into the river, through coal mines. As we continue on, we have to ensure that these companies are doing

everything they can. Most of those I've talked to are being more efficient, and with power efficiency levels comes reduced greenhouse gas emissions, which are all good for our environment. But it'll be interesting to see how the government proceeds with some sort of program to help individuals and the smaller producers in Alberta, to see how they will handle this as we go forward.

So I'd like to thank the member for bringing this motion forward. I will be supporting it, as I'm sure most people will. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** All right. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Motion 518, which urges the government to develop and implement a program encouraging Albertans to invest in and utilize alternative energy technologies in the province. I commend the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake for bringing attention to this initiative, that could strengthen Alberta's leadership in energy innovation and could further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Madam Speaker, our government is firm on its position on climate change, and we understand the implications regarding the adverse effects that greenhouse gas emissions have on the environment. I'm proud that Alberta is the first province to develop legislation regarding greenhouse gas emissions on large facilities. In 1999 the public-private partnership known as Climate Change Central was established and to this day continues to help Albertans use energy in a more sustainable manner. Our government furthered its environmental mandate by passing the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, which received royal assent on December 4, 2003.

Madam Speaker, our government had this very important discussion decades ago and was able to promote responsible economic development since. For us, the science is settled and has been settled for some time. The main objective being proposed in Motion 518 falls in line with what our government is doing, continuing to build on programs that will focus on the next generation of Albertans.

One of these initiatives is Alberta's climate change strategy, which was conceived in 2008, building on the province's previous 2002 climate change action plan. This strategy established practical and real goals as opposed to unreachable targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The three main themes highlighted in the strategy include implementing carbon capture and storage, greening energy production, and conserving and using energy efficiently.

The first theme promotes collaboration between different levels of government, industry, and scientific researchers and led to the Alberta Carbon Capture and Storage Development Council. Additionally, our government committed \$1.3 billion over 15 years to fund the Alberta carbon trunk line project as well as the Quest project, which will reduce our province's emissions by 2.76 million tonnes each year beginning in 2015. Our government is also collaborating with industry in order to research the potential for deep geothermal energy production, something my generation can be proud of, Madam Speaker.

The second theme, greening energy production, helped our government enact the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act and led to the implementation of specified gas emitters regulation. Our government also expanded our use of alternative

energy sources, that include wind and solar power, hydrogen, and, as mentioned earlier, geothermal energy.

In February of this year the Alberta Utilities Commission approved an application for a solar power plant in Brooks that would include close to 60,000 solar panels. Once completed, the power plant is expected to have a total generating capacity of 15 megawatts.

Madam Speaker, the province presented three options for companies to meet reduction targets. Companies could choose to improve the energy efficiency of their operations, buy carbon credits in the Alberta-based offset system, or pay \$15 into the climate change and emissions management fund for every tonne over the reduction target.

The third and final theme, conserving and using energy efficiently, is an initiative that strives to promote that Albertans in socioeconomic sectors try to conserve and reduce their use of their energy. Some key actions that fall under this theme include developing acts promoting more sustainable energy usage, establishing incentive programs with regard to using energy-efficient appliances, and providing government leadership by utilizing power efficiency in government buildings as well as making energy-efficient purchases.

Madam Speaker, our government is building on its promise to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As our government continues to make progress in the field of energy research and innovation, we will continue to evolve the programs, policies, and initiatives that have been already implemented. As stewards of the environment and as stewards responsible for economic development, we owe it to our children and future generations to keep Alberta strong, both environmentally and economically.

I would again like to commend the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake for building on our government's legacy in regard to the promotion of alternative energy-efficient technology use. By taking on such a praiseworthy cause, she'll undoubtedly be able to help motivate many young Albertans to develop a more sustainable relationship with our environment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, then the Member for Calgary-Fort.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this motion. I definitely feel compelled, listening to many of the members on the other side give such high praise for this province, when the reality is that we're actually lagging behind every other province when it comes to the development of alternative energies.

This motion, albeit written with good intentions, sadly, Madam Speaker, does very little to move forward on an issue that, I can tell you, the Alberta NDP has been at the forefront of, pushing this government to invest in alternative fuels and looking at not just the benefit of reducing greenhouse gasses, which is a great reason, but looking at the economic benefit, where Alberta – and I'll cite some examples – has really missed out on opportunities in the past. So as opposed to some of the members on the other side patting themselves and their government on the back, the reality is that, again, Alberta does produce more greenhouse gas emissions than any other province in the country.

Something that really needs to be clarified, Madam Speaker, is that the number one culprit for that is our coal-fired plants, which produce much of the electricity generated within this province. Now, if you want to look for leadership, I mean, there are other

provinces that have phased out coal completely. I was speaking with the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and we were discussing the fact that Ontario, I believe, has one plant that's scheduled to shut down but one that's still operational. They've moved completely off coal, which is something that, again, we've been pushing for since long before I ever got involved in politics, for decades, looking back at *Hansard*, with previous New Democrat MLAs.

Again, looking at the benefits, not just the fact that coal-fired plants produce a significant amount of greenhouse gasses and are significant contributors to pollution within this province, there are many benefits. And looking at the free energy that we get in Alberta – I mean, something that I find fascinating, Madam Speaker, is the amount of sunlight that we get here in Alberta. Regardless of the season, the hours of sunlight that Alberta gets – I don't have the numbers at my fingertips – are higher than most other provinces in the country.

The fact is that if we want to really encourage Alberta businesses to invest in this type of technology, we need to look back at history and ask: how do we have such a thriving oil and gas sector? Well, we need to go back decades to see that it was through programs and incentives that kick-started this industry, as has been the case with most industries.

As members who sit on the committee for sustainable resource stewardship know, when we looked at the potential for hydroelectricity, the fact of the matter is that in all jurisdictions across Canada there has never been a hydro facility built without some government dollars, and it's because of the massive upfront costs and capital that is required to build one of these facilities. The fact that they take on average 10 years to come online before they start producing amounts to billions of dollars, and without government incentive and government assistance, these types of projects won't exist.

You know, my frustration is with how slow-moving this government is in their attitude toward alternative energies. Members can get up and provide beautiful lip service to reducing greenhouse gasses, but at the end of the day, actions speak louder than words, and talk is cheap. When we look at the few investments that this government has made, it is quite shameful. I mean, spending \$1.3 billion on an unproven technology of sticking CO<sub>2</sub> in the ground as the silver bullet is absolutely absurd. If that \$1.3 billion was invested in wind and solar, we would be at the forefront. But it requires dollars in R and D.

What's interesting, Madam Speaker, is that a few years back there was a German company that came to Calgary. They construct wind turbines and were very interested in meeting with this government to discuss just that, building a manufacturing plant for wind turbines. But this government couldn't be bothered to give them the time of day because they are exclusively interested in oil and gas and will do very little when it comes to other forms of technology. The fact that we're not... [interjections] I believe I have the floor, hon. member.

I'll give another example. I was quite fascinated, Madam Speaker, when I was down in Medicine Hat about six months ago and had a meeting with the mayor down there to learn what Medicine Hat is doing. Now, I can appreciate that that city is sitting on a significant amount of natural gas reserves. The city, by the way, owns the rights and does develop it. You know, the two words I'm going to say are going to shock the members from the Wildrose and those from the Tories, but it's a "Crown corporation," which does what it's meant to do. The city of Medicine Hat generates \$30 million profit per year from their natural gas reserves. That's after covering all of their expenses. The city also passes significant savings on to their constituents.

Folks who live in Medicine Hat enjoy lower natural gas rates than folks in the rest of the province of Alberta.

The other part that's really interesting, Madam Speaker, is the fact that the city of Medicine Hat has developed an incentive program to encourage individuals and small businesses to invest in and install solar panels and to contribute to or use solar energy. What they do is that they offer individuals up to \$10,000 to invest in solar panels for their personal homes, and for businesses it's up to \$50,000. I can tell you that that type of investment does encourage families and businesses to invest in the technology, again, understanding that it's a long-term investment, that the payback is going to be spread out over many years. The payback isn't just in lower energy costs; it's also the benefits of reducing our pollution of the environment and our reliance on fossil fuels and nonrenewables. So I found it very fascinating that that's what Medicine Hat is doing.

Now, I know other jurisdictions – and I need to compare us to other jurisdictions – where government can play a role in encouraging individuals, families to generate energy on their own and sell it back to the grid. In the province of Alberta if a person does that, they get the exact going rate, whereas in a province like Ontario I believe it's around 10 times the going rate, that individuals will receive as a way to encourage them to generate their own energy and put that back into the grid, which, again, reduces the overall reliance on the major energy producers, which most often are nonrenewables and are the most polluting and most damaging.

5:40

Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member who put forward this motion – I believe her heart is in the right place. Urging the government, I think, is something that is positive. I can tell you, hon. member, that the Alberta NDP since 1961 has been urging the government. So that's positive. But I really wish that this would go much further, from lobbying the government, so to speak, to the government taking real action, again, whether it's in the form of incentive programs for individuals or for businesses. Maybe it's in the way of setting up some type of – well, I'm just thinking off the top, whether it's some type of arm's-length organization... [A timer sounded] Time flies when you're having fun.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to join the debate on Motion 518, which urges the government to develop and implement a program encouraging Albertans to invest in and utilize alternative energy technology in our province. I commend the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake for bringing attention to this initiative, which could strengthen Alberta's leadership in energy innovation and could further reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Energy plays a critical role in our lives every day, and energy's security will continue to become more important for future generations. Decisions we make today at the local, regional, and national levels will help shape our common future.

Madam Speaker, emissions reduction is a key to Alberta's stewardship commitment. Being proactive in reducing greenhouse gases saves energy and reduces our environmental impact. I understand that our electricity generation and retailing in Alberta is all done by the private sector, much different from other provincial jurisdictions, where electricity is still in the hands of government agencies and Crown corporations. In order to

effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we must work collaboratively with our provincial and federal counterparts.

To that end, many provinces have already implemented their own clean energy strategies. For example, in 2007 the government of British Columbia released their new B.C. energy plan, a vision for clean energy leadership. This plan puts B.C. at the forefront with an aggressive target for zero net greenhouse gas emissions, new investments in innovation, and an ambitious target to acquire 50 per cent of B.C. Hydro's incremental resource needs through conservation by 2020. The B.C. energy plan provides a made-in-B.C. solution to the global challenge of ensuring secure, reliable, and affordable energy. Under the plan the province will require zero net greenhouse gas emissions from all new electricity projects, and it will support the development of clean energy technology. As well, \$25 million has been allocated towards an innovative clean energy fund that will encourage the development of clean energy and energy efficient technologies. Madam Speaker, B.C.'s current electricity supply resources are 90 per cent clean, which sets B.C. apart from leading jurisdictions in sustainable environmental and economic management.

Manitoba is another example of being at the forefront of utilizing alternative energy resources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Manitoba is in the unique position of having the resources, experience, and wherewithal to become Canada's renewable energy powerhouse, and it's already a leader in developing one of the cleanest and greenest electricity systems in the world.

Recently the government of Manitoba released the Manitoba clean energy strategy, that focuses on made-in-Manitoba solutions to harness water, wind, solar, and biomass resources. Priority actions contained in the strategy include building a new generation of clean and renewable hydro power, leading North America in energy efficiency, keeping rates low, and growing renewable energy alternatives. The strategy will also develop Canada's first pay-as-you-save financing program, that covers the upfront capital costs of energy efficiency upgrades based on utility cost savings.

Madam Speaker, more than 98 per cent of Manitoba's electricity is renewable. This is a true testament to the unwavering commitment to reducing their hydrocarbon footprint. In 2004 Manitoba's energy efficiency program shot up in the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance rankings, from ninth place to first place.

Madam Speaker, the world has turned its attention to critical issues of global warming. As stewards of our province we have the responsibility to manage our natural resources in a way that ensures they meet both our needs of today and the needs of our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, too. We all have to think and act differently as we develop innovative and sustainable solutions to secure a clean and reliable energy supply for all Albertans.

This motion, Madam Speaker, is planning for tomorrow, not today. Our energy industry creates jobs for Albertans, supports important services for our families, and will play an important role in the decades of economic growth and in the environment that lie ahead of us.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, for bringing this motion forward.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, then Little Bow.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I, too, appreciate the tabling of Motion 518, a renewable energy program encouraging Albertans to develop and use renewable energy.

However, I'd be more convinced about the commitment of this government if they would bring it forward as a bill. Show us the money. Show us the commitment. Where's the bill?

In 2014 a motion is the weakest form of legislative action that one could take. Everybody, of course, can support the notion. The question is: where is the money, and where is the action on the ground? I want Alberta to be an energy superpower. I want Alberta to be the lowest per capita user of energy. I want Alberta to be a leader in renewable energy. I want Alberta to be a leader in state-of-the-art electricity production. That means not fossil fuels, and that means not coal-fired power plants, which still are funding 60 per cent of our power grid. Unacceptable in 2014.

I applaud the sentiments and the values in this motion, but, again, I'm looking for serious commitment from this government as is the rest of the world. I want Alberta to change through investment, research and development, and tax writeoffs to the renewable industry similar to the fossil fuel industry. We're not asking for anything exceptional that the government hasn't already produced in its incentives for the fossil fuel industry.

In fact, our fossil fuel industry has been seriously damaged by a government that continues to talk about and not take action on serious carbon and other pollutants in our environment, that has only in the last few years admitted that climate change was human induced and fossil fuel related. It's a very slow and, unfortunately, damaging approach to what the rest of the world embraced a decade ago.

We need to see a real commitment to eliminating those older coal-fired power plants, that continue to threaten health and add immeasurably to our carbon emissions and, I guess, again, to our poor reputation internationally. We can talk the talk, but when we're not walking the walk with real money, real plans, real action on the ground, and real reductions in our emissions, it's pretty tough to convince even our own citizens that we're serious about these issues.

This is almost 2014. The world is looking for leadership and investment in technology that is both low emitting and saves money for the commercial, the industrial, the enterprises that are using these alternatives, and we're still not involved actively in this tremendous entrepreneurial opportunity. We're tired of hearing words without action. If this government is serious, let's see a bill. Why are we not leading? Where is the action?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:50

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm getting up to speak in favour of Motion 518 from the Member for Lesser Slave Lake. Now, one thing I want to promote here. On Friday I was back in my constituency. The Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association, at [www.saewa.ca](http://www.saewa.ca), has 72 different municipalities joined together in this alliance . . .

**An Hon. Member:** How many?

**Mr. Donovan:** Seventy-two was the last number I got told.

. . . between towns, villages, counties, and MDs that are looking at alternative ways instead of using landfills. That represents about 250,000 people in the jurisdictions that they represent. I think it's a key thing – and this is where this motion really hits on it – to make use of renewable resources and leadership in energy innovation and greenhouse gas reductions.

To me, it's very key that we start looking at these things, and it's great to actually see this motion from the member. I think it's one of the key things that we need to look at going on to our children, our waste that we have. We want to make sure our kids have that option down the road, that we're not going to dump in some landfills. In saying that, I think a lot of the people that are in that industry, the landfills, have also noticed the different ways that they go about making sure things are out of the stream and how much they recycle out of stuff before it goes to a landfill.

I think the Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association is a pretty key group, and it goes back to planning. It's not a forced group of planning on it. This is a group that's slowly come together over time and has seen the vision of where this province should go towards waste energy and making full use of it. I think this is a prime time for this motion to come through. They just had their AGM here on the 29th of November in Nanton, which I was glad to be a part of because it had lots of MDs, reeves, mayors, and members at large at it. I think we've identified that these are key things that this province needs to look forward to, not burying our waste but making energy out of it.

I'm very happy to speak in favour of this motion and urge everyone else in this House to do the same. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak on Motion 518?

Seeing none, I would ask the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake to close.

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to say a special thank you to everyone who has spoken on this motion, and I guess I want to address the issue from Calgary-Mountain View in asking: where's the beef? Well, the goal of Motion 518 is actually to encourage the government to "develop and implement a program encouraging Albertans to invest in and make use of renewable and alternative energy technologies." That could mean financial. That could mean educational. That could mean developing programs to make sure that we continue to build on what we have presently.

Yes, we may have some issues when we're talking about some of the things that Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre spoke about. I love his constant support, I love listening to some of the assessments that he has in terms of concerns that he's brought forward, and I agree that the Ministry of Energy needs to look at the issue of microgeneration in its regulation. So I happen to agree with things that maybe need to be fixed, and I know that we try to make sure we do that.

I'd like to also thank Calgary-Hawkwood for bringing out the provincial energy strategy. You know, it's really wonderful to be able to know what is going on presently. This motion has been on the table. I've had this motion on for about nine years to try to figure how we can bring this forward – actually, it's been about seven years – to try to figure out how, then, we bring this motion forward in a good way. I want to thank you for that, for bringing that out and for how it aligns there.

Also, from Strathmore-Brooks: what type of program? Yes, as I indicated, it could be financial; it could be educational; it could be most anything in terms of how we can make this to be the best that is possible. It is only a motion, but a motion can also spur a lot of things that could happen behind the scenes.

I also wanted to talk about options for people. I think we need to look at how we can help individuals, whether it's on the financial side or the educational side. As an example, geothermal is being used in one of my bird observatories, and that is such an incredible program and an incredible technology. We have to look at all possibilities. We cannot just look at one way, but we've got to be able to look all ways in this world. That, to me, is an important component.

Edmonton-South West: oh, he's so eloquent. He's got such a view of climate change strategy that I could just take him and just hug him a bit. I know that strategy certainly aligns with what this motion is about.

I want to thank Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for the encouragement to continue to go further. I hope to goodness that he sees the benefit in things that have been done in this province. I know that we can continue to do better, and that's what this motion is all about, being able to see how we can go further.

So you talk about: where's the beef? Madam Speaker, I want to say that we still have challenges, yes, but we've got to look at ways for us to be able to explore what the possibilities are. I know that with this motion we can begin to look at all possibilities.

I want to say thank you to everybody who has supported this. I appreciate all of the encouragement, even the comments that have been made as to how we can improve this.

Thank you very, very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Denis:** I'd like to move that there's a one-minute bell if there's any division here.

[Unanimous consent granted]

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 518 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:57 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

**6:00**

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Fraser	McIver
Bhullar	Goudreau	Olesen
Bilous	Hale	Olson
Brown	Horne	Quadri
Calahasen	Jeneroux	Rodney
Cao	Johnson, L.	Scott
Casey	Kennedy-Glans	Swann
DeLong	Khan	Towle
Denis	Klimchuk	VanderBurg
Donovan	Lemke	Weadick
Drysdale	Leskiw	Webber
Fawcett	Luan	Woo-Paw
Fenske	Lukaszuk	Xiao

Totals: For – 39 Against – 0

[Motion Other than Government Motion 518 carried unanimously]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:02 p.m.]









## Table of Contents

Prayers .....	3217
Introduction of Visitors .....	3217
Introduction of Guests .....	3217, 3228
Members' Statements	
Persons with Disabilities .....	3218
Seniors' Long-term Care .....	3219
University of Alberta Health Sciences Partnerships .....	3219
Education Act Regulatory Review .....	3229
Impaired Driving .....	3229
Labour Legislation.....	3229
Oral Question Period	
Seniors' Long-term Care .....	3219, 3222, 3225
Disaster Recovery Program .....	3220
Public-service Contract Negotiations .....	3221, 3223
Winter Road Maintenance .....	3223
Oil and Gas Drilling Applications .....	3224
Alberta Health Services Quarterly Reports.....	3224
Deaths of Children in Care .....	3225
Registry Services .....	3226
Mutual Fund Adviser Incorporation .....	3226
Electricity Prices.....	3227
EcoAg Initiatives Environmental Compliance .....	3227
Presenting Petitions .....	3229
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 211 Education (International Language Programs) Amendment Act, 2013 .....	3230
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	3230
Orders of the Day .....	3234
Written Questions	
Supports Intensity Scale Interviews.....	3234
Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program.....	3235
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 208 Seniors' Advocate Act.....	3235
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Renewable and Alternative Energy Technology .....	3245
Division .....	3251

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