



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 10, 2014

Issue 5

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 28th Legislature

Second Session

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC), Speaker
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont (PC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Allen, Mike, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (Ind)
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie (W),
 Official Opposition House Leader
Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bhardwaj, Hon. Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
 Liberal Opposition House Leader
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Campbell, Hon. Robin, West Yellowhead (PC),
 Government House Leader
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),
 Deputy Government House Leader
Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC),
 Deputy Government Whip
Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND),
 New Democrat Opposition Whip
Fawcett, Hon. Kyle, Calgary-Klein (PC)
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W)
Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Fraser, Hon. Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)
Horne, Hon. Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-St. Albert (PC)
Hughes, Hon. Ken, Calgary-West (PC)
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)
Johnson, Hon. Jeff, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (PC)
Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),
 Liberal Opposition Whip
Kennedy-Glans, Hon. Donna, QC, Calgary-Varsity (PC)

Khan, Stephen, St. Albert (PC)
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)
Kubinec, Maureen, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (PC)
Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)
Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),
 Leader of the New Democrat Opposition
McAllister, Bruce, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)
McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC)
McQueen, Hon. Diana, Drayton Valley-Devon (PC)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),
 New Democrat Opposition House Leader
Oberle, Hon. Frank, Peace River (PC),
 Deputy Government House Leader
Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)
Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC),
 Deputy Government House Leader
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)
Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Quest, Hon. Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),
 Premier
Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),
 Official Opposition Whip
Scott, Hon. Donald, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (PC)
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL),
 Leader of the Liberal Opposition
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),
 Leader of the Official Opposition
Starke, Hon. Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip
VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC),
 Government Whip
Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W),
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 60

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

Independent: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

W.J. David McNeil, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services
Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Fiona Vance, Sessional Parliamentary Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Executive Council

Alison Redford	Premier, President of Executive Council
Dave Hancock	Deputy Premier, Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education
Naresh Bhardwaj	Associate Minister – Services for Persons with Disabilities
Manmeet Singh Bhullar	Minister of Human Services
Robin Campbell	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Cal Dallas	Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations
Jonathan Denis	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Wayne Drysdale	Minister of Transportation
Kyle Fawcett	Associate Minister – Recovery and Reconstruction for Southwest Alberta
Rick Fraser	Associate Minister – Public Safety
	Associate Minister – Recovery and Reconstruction for High River
Doug Griffiths	Minister of Service Alberta
Fred Horne	Minister of Health
Doug Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Ken Hughes	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Sandra Jansen	Associate Minister – Family and Community Safety
Jeff Johnson	Minister of Education, Ministerial Liaison to the Canadian Forces
Donna Kennedy-Glans	Associate Minister – Electricity and Renewable Energy
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Culture
Thomas Lukaszuk	Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour
Ric McIver	Minister of Infrastructure
Diana McQueen	Minister of Energy
Frank Oberle	Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Verlyn Olson	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Dave Quest	Associate Minister – Seniors
Dave Rodney	Associate Minister – Wellness
Donald Scott	Associate Minister – Accountability, Transparency and Transformation
Richard Starke	Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Greg Weadick	Associate Minister – Recovery and Reconstruction for Southeast Alberta
Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister – International and Intergovernmental Relations

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Amery

Deputy Chair: Mr. Fox

Dorward	Pastoor
Eggen	Quadri
Hehr	Rogers
Kubinec	Rowe
Lemke	Sarich
Luan	Stier
McDonald	

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Casey

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Khan
Barnes	Sandhu
Dorward	Sherman
Eggen	

Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Rogers

Deputy Chair: Mr. Quadri

Blakeman	Leskiw
Eggen	McDonald
Goudreau	Saskiw
Lemke	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Olesen

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

Cusanelli	McAllister
DeLong	Notley
Fenske	Pedersen
Fritz	Sandhu
Jablonski	Swann
Jeneroux	VanderBurg
Leskiw	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Jeneroux

Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman	Leskiw
Blakeman	Quadri
Brown	Wilson
DeLong	Young
Eggen	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky

Deputy Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

Casey	Mason
Forsyth	McDonald
Fritz	Sherman
Johnson, L.	Towle
Kubinec	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Mr. Xiao

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Leskiw

Allen	Notley
Brown	Olesen
Cusanelli	Rowe
DeLong	Stier
Fenske	Strankman
Fritz	Swann
Jablonski	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Kubinec

Deputy Chair: Mr. Rogers

Calahasen	Pastoor
Casey	Pedersen
Kang	Saskiw
Khan	VanderBurg
Luan	Wilson
Notley	Young
Olesen	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Anderson

Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

Allen	Khan
Amery	Luan
Barnes	Pastoor
Bilous	Sandhu
Donovan	Sarich
Fenske	Young
Hehr	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Khan

Deputy Chair: Mr. Anglin

Allen	Goudreau
Bikman	Hale
Bilous	Johnson, L.
Blakeman	Webber
Brown	Xiao
Calahasen	Young
Casey	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 10, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

May the scruples by which we abide be evident in our words and actions, may the disagreements we encounter become tools for amelioration, and may we always be blessed with wisdom to make the right choices on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please remain standing now for the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

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. [applause]

The Speaker: We don't normally applaud after the anthem. However, on this occasion we allow it because Mr. Clark, of course, has just signed on to be our regular Monday leader of *O Canada*. Congratulations and thank you.

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Commonwealth Day Message from the Queen

The Speaker: Hon. members, as you would all know, today is March 10, and that is Commonwealth Day. I have a message for you and for all Commonwealth nations from Her Majesty the Queen, head of the Commonwealth.

In her own words, Her Majesty says the following.

In July this year, the opening of the 20th Commonwealth Games will be marked by the arrival in Glasgow of the baton that started its journey from Buckingham Palace five months ago.

Many of us are following closely the news of the baton relay as it passes through the 70 countries and territories whose teams will gather for the Games. The images bring vividly to life what we mean by the Commonwealth family: it is wonderful to see the warmth, shared endeavour and goodwill as the baton is passed through the hands of many thousands of people.

Affinities of history and inheritance from the past are strong, yet we are bound together by a sense that the Commonwealth is a powerful influence of good for the future. People of all ages from different cultures are weaving an ever-growing network of links which connect us in our diversity and our common purpose. It is this unity that is expressed in this year's theme: 'Team Commonwealth'.

While national teams will be concentrating on the competition in August, Team Commonwealth will have a longer focus, working together to achieve a more enduring success.

Experiences of life differ widely throughout the Commonwealth, and we each make contributions from sometimes very different viewpoints. But we are committed to the same goals. Together we offer each other encouragement and draw strength from this mutual support.

The understanding that we belong together, and are able, through teamwork, to achieve far more than we could do alone, has always been at the heart of our approach. For all of us this is now captured in the Commonwealth Charter which sets out the values and principles which guide and motivate us.

This year, more children and young people are participating in Commonwealth Day celebrations. Advances in technology enable us to reach a greater number of young people in schools, on-line using the 'Commonwealth Class' initiative, and through events in local communities where the Commonwealth flag is being raised.

I am delighted that in this, the year of 'Team Commonwealth', we will be working to build a brighter, united future in which every one of us can play a part and share in its rewards.

Signed by Her Majesty, our Queen.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The 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 Mr. Neil Ferrer, the consul general of the Republic of the Philippines; Mrs. Melanie Rita Diano, consul of the Republic of the Philippines; and Mrs. Esmeralda Agbulos, who, of course, is the honorary consul general of the Republic of the Philippines.

Last November the Philippines experienced a devastating typhoon, deeply affecting our friends in the Philippines. This typhoon not only impacted Alberta's Filipino community but all Albertans, and we continue to send our thoughts as communities in the Philippines work to rebuild.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta and the Philippines have a long-standing trade, investment, and cultural relationship. In fact, Alberta and the Philippines benefit from close to \$90 million of two-way trade annually. We'll continue to work together to strengthen these ties so both of our jurisdictions can thrive today, tomorrow, and in the future.

I would now ask Consul General Ferrer and his delegation to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this Commonwealth Day 2014, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House members of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Edmonton branch. This organization has evolved since its founding in 1868. The Edmonton branch, founded in 2005, is very active in promoting an appreciation of a modern, progressive, and dynamic Commonwealth and the basic principles for which it stands – tolerance, diversity, freedom, justice, democracy, human rights, and sustainable development – to a generation living in an increasingly interconnected world. I had the distinct privilege to be the guest speaker at the society's dinner this past Saturday.

Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, are Joe Zasada, chair; Mr. Alex Tsang, vice-chair; Dr. John Slade, treasurer; Tara Ferris, director of education; Margaret Day, director of membership; and Jennifer Reiz, secretary. I would ask all our guests to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

Mrs. Klimchuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly some special members of Alberta's French-speaking community. Alors que notre province souligne le début des Rendez-vous de la

Francophonie du 7 au 23 mars, je tiens à vous présenter quelques merveilleux individus qui contribuent à la Francophonie albertaine. Earlier today I along with the hon. Speaker and the Deputy Premier and many of the members here had the opportunity to kick off Rendez-vous, which celebrates French language and culture across Canada.

Se joignant à nous pour cet événement et assis dans nos galeries sont des représentants de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta: M. Jean Johnson, président de l'ACFA, et M. Denis Perreux, directeur général. Please rise as I say your names.

Also in the gallery are representatives from Canadian Parents for French, the Alberta branch of a pan-Canadian association that aims to promote, support, and enhance French immersion and core French programs. Bienvenue à M. Richard Slevinsky, president of CPF Alberta; Carole Antcil-Michalysyn, vice-president of CPF national; Victoria Wishart, secretary; Candace Rogers, director from Edmonton; and Michael Tryon, executive director. CPF Alberta has more than 3,500 members and 33 chapters across the province.

1:40

Finally, I want to acknowledge some staff members from the Francophone Secretariat: Mme Cindie LeBlanc, executive director of the Francophone Secretariat, and M. Rhéal Poirier, community liaison officer. I wish these individuals des bonnes célébrations and ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Did you also have a school group to introduce, Madam Minister?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Je vous remercie, M. le Président. Il me fait grand plaisir de prendre la parole et de vous présenter, à vous et aux membres de cette Assemblée, 56 élèves des quatrième et sixième années de l'école Holy Cross Académie Internationale, une école d'immersion française située dans ma circonscription. Les étudiants sont ici avec Laura Kunce, Albert Tshakatumba, et Emilia Borroso. Avec Ms Laura Kunce, qui les a accompagné à la guitare, ils nous ont entouré avec leur performance magnifique dans la rotonde dans le cadre des célébrations de la 16e édition des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie et ont chanté *O Canada* et *Je voudrais voir la mer*. Mes chers élèves, félicitations pour une performance magnifique et pour vos efforts à maîtriser l'autre langue officielle du Canada. Je voudrais demander aux élèves de se lever pour recevoir l'accueil chaleureux et traditionnel de l'Assemblée.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members a group of 95 students and teachers from Richard Secord elementary school in the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They are seated both in the members' gallery and in the public gallery. These students have just participated in a mock Legislature. Richard Secord is a tremendous school, of which we are very proud, in Edmonton-Rutherford. Accompanying these students are their teachers Mrs. Eaton, Miss Biette, Mr. Girard, Mrs. Chalia, and Mrs. Dempster. I'd ask the students and their teachers and parent helpers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 27 students from St. Angela elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Daniel Jackson. This school is here all week participating in the School at the Leg., so if you see them wandering around, please say hi. Please give them a warm welcome now from the Legislature.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?

If not, let us move on, then, with the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly several excellent student leaders from the Alberta Students' Executive Council, or ASEC. These young, dedicated leaders will be meeting with several MLAs over the next two weeks to discuss issues affecting postsecondary education in our province. ASEC represents students from most Alberta colleges and technical institutes as well as Athabasca, MacEwan, and Mount Royal universities and Concordia University College of Alberta. We are committed to listening to students and their concerns because postsecondary education plays a significant role in our building Alberta plan, and it's important that students are included when we discuss the future direction of Campus Alberta.

I'd like to introduce to you the following individuals seated in the members' gallery and ask them to stand when I call their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Carol Neuman, executive director, ASEC; Teresa Currig, stakeholder relations, ASEC; Kenneth Taylor, vice-president external, SAIT Students' Association; Martin Cruz, president, Red Deer College Students' Association; Bethany Tynes, vice-president external, Athabasca University Students' Union; Andrew Koning, students' association president, Concordia University College. They were joined today by Daryn Rainer, vice-president external, NAIT Students' Association. Meagan Strachan, vice-president of academic, NAIT Students' Association couldn't join us this afternoon. They have risen, and I'd ask you to give them our traditional warm welcome and thank them for the work that they do.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly an outstanding Albertan, Dr. David Schindler. Dr. Schindler recently retired after an exemplary career in research and teaching at the University of Alberta of more than 24 years. He's the recipient of 11 honorary doctorate degrees and numerous other academic awards. I'll be honouring him in the House this afternoon with a member's statement. Dr. Schindler is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Velvet Martin. Velvet's daughter Samantha had a rare genetic disorder, and Alberta child services demanded that Samantha be placed in the foster system as the sole means of accessing medical care. Samantha had not been examined by a doctor for three years, got sick, and eventually died of a cardiac arrest. In the courts Velvet fought and won a publication ban of Samantha's circumstances so she could again utter her daughter's name in public. Her advocacy has resulted in Samantha's law. Velvet is a champion for our children who desperately need help and care. I would ask Velvet to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and introduce today Mr. Len Thom, who's a very, very good friend of mine. We can talk politics. We can talk business. We can talk law. We can even talk about the Oilers and hockey and many other sports.

An Hon. Member: Hairstyles.

Mr. Dorward: We talk about hairstyles on occasion. Mr. Len Thom is the president of the PC association of Gold Bar, in my area, and, as I said, a very, very good friend. Mr. Thom, if you could rise please and receive the warm response of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Assembly two members of my family, who are joining us in the public gallery today. The first is my daughter Angela Cardinal, who along with her family are four of the 100,000 people who moved to Alberta in 2013. Angela is a professional engineer practising here in Edmonton, and I'm so proud of her and so pleased that they're much closer to home. She's joined by her father-in-law, Dr. Raynald Cardinal, a chiropractor and a passionate organic farmer. He practises his medical profession both in Quebec and Ontario, and he farms on the border between the two. We have interesting conversations about my Bill 201. This is the first time for both of them watching any proceedings in the Legislature, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have two more introductions. Let's try and squeeze them in.

Edmonton-Calder, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members here today someone who certainly is very well known, at least in my family. He's a writer, he's a traveller, and he's recently moved back here, Stewart McLean, that Stewart MacLean, my cousin who lives in Sherwood Park. I would like him to rise here, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Rogers: Merci, M. le Président. Je vous présente ma première fille. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my oldest daughter, Candace Rogers. Candace is a product of the French immersion system in this province. She is a graduate of Campus Saint-Jean, and she now serves as head of recruiting. She has been introduced earlier as a member of the board of CPF Alberta. I'm extremely proud of Candace. Candace Rogers, please rise.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. First main set of questions.

Provincial Borrowing

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Premier once said that it's not debt; it's hope. If that's the case, Budget 2014 is the most hope-filled budget in 20 years. This government will borrow nearly \$22 billion by 2016, all but wiping out Alberta's reputation as a leader in fiscal management. Most importantly, Alberta taxpayers will be

on the hook for \$820 million a year in interest payments alone. That's \$820 million that won't be available to hire teachers, to reduce health care wait times, or to look after our seniors. To the Premier: why is she saddling future generations with so much debt?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of groups in the province that understand the financial situation that we're in, and that is that we are in the best financial situation of any jurisdiction in this country. I'll quote the chair of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, himself a chartered accountant.

We see this as being a very solid and forward-looking budget... If we were going to operate solely on a cash basis, we wouldn't be able to manage the increase in population that we see in a year-over-year basis... It's very important that we... borrow to build this infrastructure.

If they were to pay cash, they would cut a billion dollars out of Education, cut a billion dollars out of Health. How are they going to pay for it?

Ms Smith: We'd cut unnecessary travel and other unnecessary expenses.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier also once said, "Debt is the trap that has caught so many struggling governments. Debt has proven the death of countless dreams." Later on she was even more specific. She said: Alberta does not have debt, and we will not incur debt. Those quotes are barely two years old. Now here we are, and this Premier is set to plunge us back into debt levels that we have not seen since the early 1990s. We all remember those dark days. To the Premier: why did she break her promise on debt?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, one of the Premier's promises is that we will build the schools, we will build the hospitals, we will build the roads, we will do the things that you do when you're a growing province. The debt that we are taking on is capital debt. We cannot borrow for operating. We've been very clear with that. There are four rules around that debt. We capped it. This is an argument that they tried to put forward last year. They've lost their deficit argument. Now they're going on this argument.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, if they're so impressed with their level of debt, it makes me wonder why it is that they're going to great lengths to hide this debt. They've reworked the entire provincial budget to try to sweep it under the rug and trick Albertans into believing that there is a surplus, which doesn't actually exist. But Albertans are smarter than that. They see through this government's spin, and they know that this budget is not balanced. To the Premier: why does she continue to insult Albertans' intelligence with phony surpluses and hidden debt?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the hon. member wasn't listening to the Budget Address because in the Budget Address I actually made it very clear that we were going to be borrowing for capital projects this year. I also made it very clear that the consolidated surplus of \$1.1 billion is calculated in exactly the same way that the federal government does it, that the provincial governments of B.C., Ontario, and all of the other budgets do it. If Minister Flaherty is wrong, then I guess we are wrong, but he's not.

The Speaker: The hon. leader, second main set of questions.

Ms Smith: It's certainly not calculated the way Mr. Dinning used to calculate it back in the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, this government is now bringing in more revenues than ever before. We are projected to bring in \$44.4 billion in Budget 2014. That's \$5 billion more than they budgeted last year.

In fact, Alberta now takes in as much revenue as British Columbia despite having half a million fewer people, but apparently that's just not enough for this government. Despite having record revenues, this government still can't balance the budget or stay out of debt. To the Premier: why do we need to borrow billions when we have way more money than we ever had before?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that B.C. is losing people. We are gaining people. We are growing. We will be the third-most populous province in this country in no short order. Here's the CIBC's analysis of it.

In general, direct borrowing has triggered an increase in provincial liabilities.

That's true.

However, Alberta has implemented a prudent debt management framework, including a cap on borrowing, the setting aside of revenue for associated interest costs and the establishment of debt repayment funds to fully cover future capital-related maturities. Moreover, with large and growing financial assets, Alberta remains the sole province without any net debt – a unique financial . . .

Ms Smith: Imagine that, a bank encouraging someone to borrow more money.

Mr. Speaker, this government's spin isn't fooling anybody. No matter how many fancy tricks this government tries to pull on the budget, Albertans know at the end of the day that there are only two columns that matter: total money coming in and total money going out. Of course, this government has done all it can to make it impossible to calculate those two columns, and it's obvious why. So tell us again, Premier: how can we have a budget surplus when the money going out is at least \$2.7 billion more than the money coming in?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the first quote that I read to you was not from a bank; it was from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, who are the business owners across this province and actually know how to create economic wealth.

The second thing I'm going to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the federal government suggests that they have a \$2.9 billion deficit. They are borrowing \$95 billion this year. Is the hon. member across the way suggesting that the federal government is lying about the deficit situation that they are in today? I think not.

The other thing that I would tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that there are people in this province who are looking for their new school. There are people in this province who are looking for the road being fixed. That's what this budget does.

Ms Smith: There are people in this province that are looking for a single, consolidated set of books, Mr. Speaker.

Let's make this simple. Since the Finance minister likes his household analogy, say a family brings in \$4,300 a month. They stick to their budget, spending \$4,000 on things like rent and car and groceries, leaving them a modest \$300 surplus. But instead of banking it, they go out and buy a car and a computer and new furniture, all on their credit card, increasing their payments by \$600 a month. So now they've got \$4,300 coming in, \$4,600 going out. Here's a trick question for the Finance minister: is that family budget balanced?

Mr. Horner: Absolutely not, because they are . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I'm glad they finally figured it out, because not included in her \$4,300 budget was the price of their house. They didn't pay for it all in one month. They made the payment. That's how they balance the budget.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that that party opposite won't even tell Albertans how they plan to pay for their capital plan. I find it interesting that they actually separated their capital plan from their operating plan in their alternative budget.

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

Ms Smith: It's a 10-year, debt-free, \$50 billion capital plan within a single, consolidated budget.

Provincial Budget

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we're not the only ones baffled by the government's fiscal incompetence. Mayor Don Iveson and Mayor Nenshi were disappointed to learn that Budget 2014 contained no money for improving the cities' LRT networks despite promises to the contrary. Paraphrasing one commentator on Twitter: record revenues, record debt, and no LRT; what gives? To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given that we have record revenue and we are spending more money than ever before, what is he telling mayors Iveson and Nenshi? What gives?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I'm pleased to report that I have a very constructive, engaged relationship with the two mayors of the large cities. We've talked about a lot of different topics, including how we ensure that these world-class cities are funded appropriately for what we are asking them to do.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. You didn't have to check Twitter.

Mr. Hughes: We didn't have to check Twitter.

Ms Smith: This government should stop making promises they cannot keep. The Deputy Premier is in charge of negotiations with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Now, that's a tough job at the best of times. I can imagine that that job didn't become any easier when the Premier's own budget got a juicy 10 per cent increase in Budget 2014, to say nothing of the Premier's well-documented personal travel preferences. To the Deputy Premier: does he think the Premier's personal pampering of herself will help him or hurt him in his efforts to convince the public-sector unions to take less?

The Speaker: Just be careful with questions that solicit opinion. That one does.

Mr. Hancock: Well, not only is it soliciting an opinion, it is making an egregious comment that's entirely untoward and entirely uncalled for. The real question is: do Albertans want to get timely, quality, accurate information from their government? The answer is yes. In order to do that, do we need to have people who will receive those letters, receive those comments, and respond to them with accurate information? Yes. That's why the Premier's office and the Premier need the ability to communicate with the public.

Also, Mr. Speaker, people want to come to this province. We go out to sell Alberta across the world, to tell the world about Alberta, but we also want people to come to Alberta to see what we have here, to see what's happening in the oil sands. That costs money, and Albertans want . . .

2:00

Ms Smith: Well, that's certainly not what I'm hearing, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Education must at least take some comfort in this budget because the fuzzy math curriculum that he's pushing to Alberta's classrooms appears to have made it to the cabinet table. There's no other way to explain how a deficit can become a surplus if not for a stunning lack of basic math skills. To the Education minister: does he support his government's new-math budget, or is this the kind of faulty addition and subtraction that they are going to be teaching to our children?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely support this budget because it's putting classrooms out there for students. You know, it's interesting that when we're in here, we get questioned about the capital – they don't want the schools; they don't want them borrowed – yet when we're out in the constituency, the only question we get is: where do we stand for the sod-turning, and where do we stand for the photo op? On the front page of the *Airdrie Echo* you'll note last year the Member for Airdrie was there turning sod on a government building, a P3 financed school. I guess it's okay to borrow capital, borrow funds for schools as long as it's in their constituency.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Premier's Office Budget

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Premier refused to pay back the \$45,000 she wasted on her South Africa trip. Now we learn that in Budget 2014 spending in the Premier's office is up \$1.2 million, nearly a 10 per cent increase for the imperial court. Meanwhile this government slashes the child health benefit by 6 per cent and the seniors' drug plan by a whopping 25 per cent. To the Premier: why is your office budget so much more important than Alberta's seniors and children?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, by phrasing the question in that way, the hon. member is obviously misunderstanding entirely what's happening with the Seniors budget and the other budgets. I can tell him what I told the Leader of the Opposition. Albertans contact this government. They want to tell us what they're thinking. They want responses, and they want them on a timely basis. We make no apologies for giving Albertans timely, accurate information about what's actually happening in this province. The Premier's office and the Premier want to have others come from around the world to see what's happening in Alberta because they make investments in Alberta, they come and work in Alberta, and they buy our products. It's important to be able to host them . . .

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder we're going into debt. They don't know how to do math. A cut is a cut, and a \$1.2 million increase in the budget is an increase.

According to the imperial court itself \$400,000 of this increase is for hosting expenses. Assuming our famously well-travelled Premier were to stick around from Monday to Friday every week, she would still be spending \$1,500 a day on entertaining, all this while taking a let them eat cake approach to our children, our seniors, and public-sector servants. To the Premier: just how much champagne, caviar, and foie gras do you and your inner circle need?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes light of what's a very important piece of public work. It's not champagne and caviar. It's about bringing the world to Alberta to see what we have here. It's about making sure that people from the United States understand what the oil sands looks like, understand what happens in Alberta and are prepared to invest here, to work here, to come here, to travel and to spend their money here, sometimes to relocate here, but also to buy our products. It's not just about going out and selling to the world. It's also about having the world come to Alberta. [interjections] That's not champagne and caviar. It's good public work.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, advice to this government: investing in our children, treating our seniors with dignity and respect, and investing in front-line public servants is the best investment we can make as a society.

Of the \$1.2 million increase to the Premier's \$11.6 million budget \$300,000 will be spent on scribes tasked with replying to what must surely be a mountain of incoming correspondence. [interjections] To the Premier: if you are getting so many angry letters about Travelgate, wouldn't it be more cost-effective just to pay back the 45,000 bucks instead of wasting another 300 grand?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it may well be possible that that hon. member can answer all his letters on a Friday afternoon within an hour, but I can tell you from experience in this government that Albertans contact their government on a daily basis. They want information. They want accurate and quality information. They want to give the government their ideas about how we should do things, and we want to hear them and listen to them, and we want to respond to them. [interjections] There is nothing improper with that. That's actually how government works. The hon. member ought to know that because he did have a short mentorship in that area, but he's obviously forgotten what he learned.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's getting increasingly more difficult to hear the questions and to hear the answers. When you hear your own colleagues having to shout their questions out and you hear colleagues on this side having to shout their answers out, clearly the noise level has escalated beyond what it should be. Let's try and keep it down, shall we?

To demonstrate how we do that, let's go to Edmonton-Calder.

Misericordia Community Hospital

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is leaving the front-line staff to prop up the Misericordia hospital in Edmonton while the facility crumbles around them. Last month the CBC released photographs showing the building hardly fit for habitation, let alone hospital work. Staff complain about the intensive care unit. Meant to be there for only two more years, it's still in use after 13 years. To the Minister of Health: why is there no immediate action for the Misericordia hospital in this year's budget?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is immediate action for the Misericordia hospital. As I'm sure all members in this House know, particularly those from the capital region, the Misericordia is one of our oldest and one of the proudest hospitals that we have in the city. A total of \$19 million has already been allocated for critical infrastructure repair at the Misericordia. I've asked Alberta

Health Services to work with Covenant Health to identify what other resources may be needed in the next five years.

Mr. Eggen: This budget: you needed to use it as a starting point, to start building a new hospital at the Misericordia. The patients and their families know how bad the hospital is. They see it every day. Staff working in the ICU certainly know how bad it is. Why is this government subjecting Albertans to dangerous and unhealthy conditions at the Misericordia hospital in Edmonton?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, that last statement is patently untrue and completely irresponsible. The care that is provided at the Misericordia hospital is safe care. It's of high quality. It's comparable to any other hospital in this province.

We know and the hon. member as an MLA in this city should know that the city of Edmonton is going to need additional hospital capacity in the very near future. We're working on that. I'm working on that with the Minister of Infrastructure. In the meantime we are flowing very significant funds to Covenant Health to keep the facility running and in good repair.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, the physical structure of this hospital requires immediate attention. By any measure of logic or science or health this facility does not make the grade. Will the minister please tell us what motivates this government to ignore the sad state of this Edmonton hospital? Is it politics? Money? Denial? Why don't you just fix the hospital?

Mr. Horne: We are fixing the hospital instead of spending our time, as the hon. member is doing, attempting to scare patients and staff and bring the facility into disrepute. Mr. Speaker, \$19.2 million as a contribution to critical infrastructure repair is a very significant contribution. There are other facilities across the province that also have needs. We're working to address all of those. Edmonton will see a new hospital in the very near future. As I said, I'm working with the Minister of Infrastructure on that very issue right now.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The first five spots have now gone by, which means no more preambles, please, to supplementals, starting with Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Highway 63 Safety

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just over a year ago the government accepted recommendation 12 from my report entitled *Towards a Safer 63*, which called for dedicated RCMP and sheriff traffic enforcement as well as aerial enforcement. This increased presence has succeeded in increasing the number of charges laid, and I've heard comments from my constituents that there's been a noticeable improvement in driver behaviour. But I do hear that regardless of these efforts, the worst offenders are now commercial traffic, and many have not changed their dangerous driving habits. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: given the higher percentage of commercial traffic on highway 63, what percentage of fatal accidents involve commercial vehicles and what percentage of tickets . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The data for 2013 is not available yet, but for 2012 3.6 per cent of casualty collisions in Alberta involved commercial vehicles, down 1.4 per cent from

the year before. Again, the commercial vehicle inspectors work very hard to look at defects involving commercial vehicles. The vast majority of the commercial vehicle accidents, though, involve actual driver error or speed and not defects to the commercial vehicles.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Allen: Thank you. To the same minister: given that there's a significant volume of wide-load and commercial traffic on highway 63, what is the ratio of commercial vehicle enforcement to civilian enforcement?

Mr. Denis: Again, Mr. Speaker, that isn't available for 2013. The member is quite correct in that we do work very hard, specifically with the report that he authored, and we will continue to do so, particularly as we move forward to twin highway 63, which is something being done by the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Allen: Again to the same minister: what measures have you taken to discourage traffic offences by commercial vehicles on highway 63 as well as on all of Alberta's highways?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Officers with the integrated traffic units in the commercial vehicle enforcement branch regularly patrol highway 63 and often include many checkpoints. We are dedicated to making highway 63 safer as well as all highways throughout the four corners of Alberta.

Electricity Pricing

Mr. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the serious allegations of electricity price manipulation in Alberta the opposition has tried twice now to get a straight answer from this government on its policy dealing with companies that withhold electricity from the market in order to raise the price of electricity. So we need to try one more time. To the minister: is it the policy of this government to allow companies to withhold electricity from the market in order to raise prices?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is so tempting for me to go down this rabbit hole with this member and dig into these questions being looked at by the AUC, but we both know that to do so would put the AUC's independent considerations of these allegations at risk, and I just won't do it.

Mr. Anglin: It's got nothing to do with the allegations.

Given that Albertans have a right to a straight answer and given that the market needs clarity, again to the minister: is it permissible in Alberta's electricity market to withhold electricity from the market to raise the price of electricity? Yes or no?

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Mr. Speaker, I would say that it would be very clear to this particular member, who is very familiar with this system, that the values of the system – fairness, efficiency, open competition – remain as true today as the day this legislation was drafted. They're essential values that ensure the integrity of this system and protect consumers, residential and small businesses. That should be the priority of all of us, including this member.

Mr. Anglin: Well, let's talk about integrity of the system. Given that a straight answer could save Albertans millions of dollars in

lengthy hearing costs and given that electricity companies deserve clarification, again to the minister: is it legal for a company to withhold electricity from the market in an effort to raise the price of electricity? Yes or no?

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Mr. Speaker, this member knows that this place is not where this issue is going to be adjudicated. [interjections] This member seems to be the only person suggesting that the AUC is not the right venue for this issue to be reviewed. I'd also like to point out that this member has from time to time commented very positively on the AUC's capacity to look at these kinds of issues. So I'm alarmed at his lack of consistency here. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's Commonwealth Day. Let's be nice, please.

Let's go on to Calgary-Bow, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

Workforce Planning

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first question is for the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. New numbers show that Alberta's unemployment rate is 4.3 per cent. Now, while we can all be excited that Albertans have jobs, this is also a challenge. Are we essentially at full employment, and are shortages just around the corner?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy in a sense to report that our official rate of unemployment is 4.3 per cent, which most economists in most places in the world would argue is full, frictional employment. The federal government has just recently credited us for creating in the province of Alberta 80 per cent of all jobs created in Canada last year.

But that, Mr. Speaker, even as it is great news, also brings its own difficulties. Even though we have full employment, there are still Albertans that are marginalized or may not have the skills required to fill some of these jobs, and that is something that we will continue to work on not only as a province but also with the federal government.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. This supplemental is to the Minister of Finance. The budget is based on the building Alberta plan and assumptions of future economic growth. What risks do job numbers like this pose to this growth?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is one of the very high risks within the economy of Alberta. In fact, today I spoke to the Chambers of Commerce, who, by the way, gave us a qualified balance sheet description of the surplus, so the accountants know what's going on. It is one of the things that the chamber is concerned about. In fact, the chambers in Calgary and Edmonton and the Alberta chambers have all said to us that one of the things we need to do is to attract more people to our province, train more people. That's what Bill 1 is all about. We need to talk to the federal government about getting more people to come into our province, because even with 105,000 people we actually lowered our unemployment rate.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. Back to the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: what are you doing to ensure that we are dealing with the economic threat of skills shortages?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're working with our postsecondary education system, making sure that the students who graduate from schools have the skills required to fill the jobs. We're working with our marginalized groups – our aboriginal community, persons with disabilities, and often women who find it difficult to get back to work – though groups like Women Building Futures. Also, yes, temporary foreign workers are important. However, I have to tell you that I am much more inclined to be supportive of permanent foreign workers as opposed to temporary foreign workers.

Mr. McAllister: I know it's Commonwealth Day, but surely we can do a little better than that, Mr. Speaker.

School Construction

Mr. McAllister: We've been asking the Minister of Education about his New Age, wishy-washy math curriculum a lot lately. A careful reading of the budget, though, suggests that his issues with math might be more serious than we first thought. You see, this government promised to build 50 schools and renovate 70 more this term. They claim that it will cost \$2 billion, but when you add up the money committed to these schools in the budget, it comes to just over half of that. Is the Education minister aware that his school promises don't add up for Albertans, or is this some sort of New Age mathematics?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member: I'm actually grateful for a good question today. Thank you. The fact is that the budget talks about – in fact, we did a release that said that the schools will cost in the neighbourhood of \$2 billion. There's \$1.2 billion in the budget. The reason is that we haven't put the contracts out, we haven't put the tenders out, we haven't even decided yet whether they're P3s or otherwise. A P3 can actually be paid out over as much as 30 years. So I'll just ask the hon. member to consider that, and as the contracts and the tenders go out, we will have those numbers, and the questions will be answered then.

Mr. McAllister: So many unanswered questions. It's like we're watching a soap opera in here with this government.

Given that the minister has made 50 announcements, planted 50 signs, done 50 photo ops and given that according to his own numbers he won't be delivering the 50 new schools that he promised on time, I would ask the minister: will he come clean with Albertans, and will he let us know which communities will not be getting their previously promised schools?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, under this Premier, with this government the building Alberta plan has promised 50 new and 70 renovated schools, and that's what we'll do. But I would also ask the hon. member: his members on that side have talked about how important it is to have an infrastructure list on their website. We certainly have one on ours. He hasn't got a single school listed on their website despite the fact that they come in this House all the time and protest and pound the table that they should be on there. They haven't promised any. This government is actually building them.

Mr. McAllister: Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the fearmongering by this side is as tired and old as the government itself.

Given that this government is relying on P3s to build more than half of their new schools, given that they're getting little to no

interest from contractors on this, will the Infrastructure minister change course, switch to the manageable and competitive design-and-build contracts, which the Wildrose has been lobbying for all along, so that we can finally do the right thing for Alberta and get some shovels into the ground?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member doesn't know whether it's Monday or Friday. He's talking out of both sides of his mouth. The fact is that we will make the decision. We will announce it. But I'm sad to see them against P3s when they've saved the taxpayers in this province over \$2 billion, when they've delivered projects on time and on budget, when they've given good quality infrastructure that Albertans can enjoy for years and years and years. Eighty-six thousand Albertan kids will enjoy the new and improved seats from the plan we have coming forward. That's what this government is doing with the building Alberta plan.

2:20

Mr. Hehr: Well, let me build on those questions. One of the key promises made by the Premier was that her government would build 50 new schools by 2016. Two years into this mandate not a single hole has been dug, no cement poured, nary a nail pounded. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that it takes three years to physically build a school. Clearly and in no uncertain terms, this government will fail to complete even one of these promised schools, much less 50. So to the Minister of Infrastructure: will you please come clean with the Alberta public and admit that these 50 new schools will not be complete by 2016?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the hon. member's concern, but I would ask him to look at a little bit more information. I took the time on Friday last week to go through a school in Airdrie that's under construction. It's almost finished, in another couple of months. [interjections] The fact is that after about 16 months the school is almost complete. [interjections]

The Speaker: You know, I would have thought that constructing schools would be a very serious question requiring a serious answer. We've had one. Let's wait for the other one here. These interjections have to stop, folks, please. Let's show some respect for each other.

Hon. Minister, would you like to start over?

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just finish my thought.

The fact is that there are examples right now of schools built in well under two years. That's what we're challenged to do. There's no doubt that it's a challenge, but, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and this government promised under the building Alberta plan to get those schools done, and we are working feverishly to do so.

Mr. Hehr: Well, the answer given by the Minister of Infrastructure is simply laughable. Given that this government's own documents show an \$800 million shortfall in funding these new schools, how is the minister going to pay the construction workers to build these schools? With IOUs?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to reanswer the question I answered two or three questions ago, because the hon. member clearly needs to hear it twice to get it through whatever it has to get through. The fact is that the 50 and 70 schools are in the plan. When we do the contracts, we will work out, decide whether they're P3s or otherwise. We will get the schools built. As those contracts get firmed up, whether we decide on P3s, which could be paid out over 30 years – or as the Wildrose suggests, they could

be quicker under the other plan. As we do that, we will update the numbers. Today the numbers are not . . .

The Speaker: Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Hehr: No, no.

The Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. One more supplemental. My apologies.

Mr. Hehr: Now, Mr. Speaker, given that it takes three years to build the new schools – that would take us to 2017 if the government started building them today – and given that even a kindergarten student knows that it takes money to build schools and given that this government doesn't have any, will the minister just admit that these schools will not be built by 2016? It's a pretty easy answer.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll repeat again: under the building Alberta plan we've promised to do it. It's in our business plan. It's in our budget. We'll get it done.

But I'll actually give this hon. member credit for one thing, Mr. Speaker. He's quite forward and public about saying that he wants to raise taxes to build the infrastructure. Under this Premier and this government we're going to do it without raising taxes because that's what Albertans want.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Child Poverty Reduction Strategy

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, continuing on our theme of broken promises, the Premier claimed she would eliminate child poverty in five years. Now we've got the budget for three of those five years, and instead of concrete commitments we see more cuts and growing inequality. To the Minister of Human Services: almost 20 per cent of young children in Alberta live in oppressive poverty. Why doesn't he understand that the longer he waits to act, the more they will suffer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be moving forth with creating a child poverty strategy, that will help us to ensure that all Albertans have access to all the opportunities that we know 82,000 new Albertans had last year, because Alberta produced 82,000 new jobs last year. Economic development and prosperity is one of the best ways to help people reach out from poverty, and we have a solid track record of that.

Ms Notley: More empty words.

Given that this year's budget contains massive cuts to services that lift families out of poverty such as income support for learners, adult upgrading, and training for work and given that you can't end child poverty without ending poverty for the families with whom those children live, can the minister explain how he thinks any Albertan will believe this government's claims when they have chosen to cut proven poverty-reduction mechanisms by up to 50 per cent? Shame.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, the member would be well advised to know that the reason why there appears to be a decrease in that

part of the budget is because we're working on a new agreement with the federal government on the jobs grant. As soon as that agreement is signed, that money is there, that training is there, and more Albertans get more opportunities. This is the best place to be to reach out from poverty and achieve great economic success.

Ms. Notley: Well, it's not there now.

Given that this government has received countless antipoverty reports from researchers, advocates, community agencies, and municipalities in the last five years and given that all of those reports say that neither income support nor the minimum wage are anywhere near adequate to provide for the families of the 90,000 Alberta children living in poverty, why won't this minister admit that this do-nothing provincial budget and its recipe for continued government inaction put responsibility for that child poverty directly at this government's feet?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of different tools that we are using to help Albertans that require support, whether it be the 25,000 Alberta children that receive subsidized daycare, whether it be the countless Albertans that receive income supports, the thousands of Albertans that receive training supports. The fact is that this is the place that has the lowest taxes of all the jurisdictions in this great country of Canada and pumps out 87 per cent of the new jobs in Canada. Alberta is growth and opportunity, and everybody shall see it.

Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, in the real world people who mismanage assets are fired, but in this PC government these people are promoted. The budget included \$1.8 billion for the southwest leg of the Calgary ring road, but when asked for a total cost, the Transportation minister was flippant, saying, quote, it will be less than \$10 billion and more than \$1.8 billion. How's that? Unquote. To the minister: do you have any idea what this project is going to cost? Two billion? Five billion? Ten billion? Twenty billion?

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, I remember doing that article with the journalist, and the journalist was trying to pin me down to say a number that we don't have yet, so I wasn't going to. That ring road won't be finished for seven or eight years. We don't know if it'll be a P3. We don't know all the land costs yet. So I don't have the exact answer to that question. Unlike those opposite, I don't say facts that I don't know.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The government members can thump their desks all they want, but does this government still believe that projects like the \$400 million federal building, renovated for PC MLAs, are a greater need than 20 schools that could have been built instead, are more important than 20 schools?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, on the federal building it's kind of interesting to hear the member from that party talking. Apparently, they think it's important because they're going to be in it. [interjections] It's important enough to them that they actually asked for a change order the other day, that would slow it down, add additional costs. [interjections] They can't decide whether it's important or not. This government, however, is building Alberta and putting in place . . .

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: You know, there are times like this where you're just not sure what to do, right? So I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to take away your last supplemental right now because there was considerably too much heckling going on over here. There was too much heckling going on over here. And then – guess what? – we had too much heckling going on over here, too, so I'm going to come back and penalize someone on this side when your turn comes as well. That will hopefully show you that I'm serious about having some order and decorum here in the House.

Mr. Anderson: Point of clarification.

The Speaker: Please have a seat, hon. member, okay? I'm taking away your supplemental, and I'll be taking one away here as well, all right? You'll address me at the end of question period.

Let's move on. Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

2:30

Native Grassland Conservation

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council, or RAC, comprised of a broad-based group of 18 stakeholders, met over 18 months and made recommendations to the South Saskatchewan regional plan. The RAC detailed the need to protect grasslands conservation areas which are critical to grassland habitat in southern Alberta. They are the Wild Horse plains, the Twin River heritage rangeland extension, the South Saskatchewan River corridor, and the Bow River-Majorville upland corridor. This protection would have allowed continued use of grazing and resource extraction while preserving the natural areas. My questions are for the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. Why does the South Saskatchewan regional plan not . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We consulted with Albertans, and the advice we received from the regional advisory council on this is a very important issue. During those consultations Albertans in the regions, including those in the grazing and ranching community, told us they did not support the development of conservation management areas for grasslands. This is due in large part to the good grazing practices of landowners and ranchers in this area, which have resulted in significant intact grasslands. Those well-managed cattle grazing and traditional practices of long-term grazing contribute greatly to the ecological health of this continent's finest remaining native grasslands.

Dr. Brown: To the same minister: will your ministry remedy this oversight and take steps to protect the vital publicly owned grasslands in these specific areas mentioned by the RAC and in southern Alberta in general?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for his continued advocacy of this situation. However, we are indeed taking steps to protect grasslands under the regional plan for southern Alberta. We know that grasslands have a high ecological value for biodiversity and watershed protection, and we are committed to maintaining intact native grasslands as a high priority under the regional plan. We will implement footprint

management strategies and integrate other initiatives like conservation offsets and species-at-risk conservation programs. As well, we will work to minimize the conversion of grasslands to other uses. These are significant actions under the regional plan to help us conserve this vitally important southern Alberta landscape.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm sorry to have to take away your second supplemental, but I'm taking one away from this side as I did from this side to be fair so that you will all know that I'm serious. Have a seat, please.

Let's go on. Drumheller-Stettler, followed by Stony Plain.

Travel Alberta Executive Expenses

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have seen PC ministers flying their family to the Olympics and a Premier who wastes money on flights, so it's no surprise that the CEO of Travel Alberta, who makes \$240,000 in salary plus \$150,000 in benefits, saw fit to bill taxpayers for a \$150 tuxedo rental as a hospitality expense. Will the minister ask the CEO to pay back this claim?

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. You know, I just recently returned from the world's largest tourism and conference centre in Berlin, and while there we, including the CEO of Travel Alberta, met with a variety of officials from around the world in promoting Alberta as a tourism destination, promoting the 139,000 jobs, the 19,000 businesses, and the \$7.8 billion tourism industry.

These guys want our CEO to show up in suspenders and blue jeans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler. First sup.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll table the picture of the tuxedo on the CEO after question period.

Given that the Travel Alberta CEO expensed an \$830 meal at a very high-end restaurant in Banff, which the CEO then tweeted that eating there was, and I quote, one more check on the bucket list, does the minister not recognize that this is an open and blatant abuse of taxpayers' dollars?

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, I will say it again. Travel Alberta, which during the course of the conference in Berlin won its 47th international award for trade and marketing, for an organization that only turns five years old on April 1, has done an outstanding job of promoting Alberta as a tourism destination throughout the world. In fact, we were told throughout our time in Berlin that Alberta remains on everybody's tourism bucket list, and that's the bucket list that we're really concerned about.

Mr. Strankman: Will it be your bucket list or theirs?

Given that taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing the luxuries of government officials and given that taxpayers will be distressed to learn that Travel Alberta's CEO took an \$8,800 first-class flight to Singapore this past June just to have one dinner meeting with one applicant for a job, will the minister of tourism call on the Auditor General to get to the bottom of what's happening in Travel Alberta? This culture of entitlement has . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, in point of fact, the Auditor General reviews Travel Alberta along with all of the agencies within Tourism, Parks and Recreation on an annual basis. I'm proud to know and I'm proud to state that we have not had any negative

recommendations. It comes up at Public Accounts this Wednesday, and they'll have every opportunity to ask those questions.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that our tourism levy grows, and our tourism business grows. If it was up to those people over there, our brand would not be Remember to Breathe; it would be Just Try Not to Choke. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Some people don't think I'm serious. I'm very serious. I will take away more questions. I have the right to do that if I need to maintain law, order, and discipline in this Assembly, and that's what I'm going to do. So make no mistake about it. I warned you last week. I'll be clarifying it for Airdrie, I'm sure, at the end of question period if he asks. I'm just telling you again.

Please. I can appreciate that when somebody stands up, you want to pound your desks and give them a little moral support. When you hear a really good question or a really tough one or a really good answer, I can appreciate that you want to bang your desks and cheer them on a little bit then. I'm prepared to go along with that but not during the question itself and certainly not during the answer itself, please. It's rude; it's disrespectful.

You all saw the letter I sent you from one school. I could send you more from other schools who have now said that they're not even bringing their students here for question period anymore. How do you like that? That just happened last fall.

Let's go on. Stony Plain, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Services for Seniors

Mr. Lemke: Thank you. Every day 60 Albertans reach the age of 65. It is projected that by 2031, Mr. Speaker, 1 in 5 Albertans will be a senior. On a daily basis I hear my constituents voice their concerns over the waiting lists that they are put on and the costs of living in these facilities. To the Associate Minister – Seniors: how are you building Alberta for the people that have worked their entire lives contributing to this province?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Member for Stony Plain for the question. I know he's a strong advocate for the seniors in his constituency and for all of his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the enormous contribution that our seniors make, and we remain committed to building an Alberta that meets their needs. Since 2010 we've undertaken an unprecedented expansion in continuing care. There have been 3,000 continuing care spaces built in this province, and another 2,000 are going to be built in the next two years. We're on target to deliver it. That's a 15 per cent increase since 2010. So there are many spaces coming for seniors and many great things to come.

Mr. Lemke: To the same minister: how do you plan on addressing the wait times that plague the seniors of Stony Plain?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we want to see that our seniors have timely access to continuing care services and supports no matter where they happen to live in the province. In Stony Plain there are 236 publicly funded continuing care spaces.

In addition to these spaces, one of the most effective ways we can reduce wait times is by providing more home care to people in the community. Since 2010 we have increased our investment in home care by more than \$100 million, or 24 per cent. Last year we invested more than half a billion dollars to help more than 108,000 Albertans get the care that they need staying in their own home.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What exactly are you doing to ensure that the new spaces are affordable and feasible for the seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Quest: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. We're committed to providing publicly funded health care that's accessible to all Albertans regardless of their ability to pay, and that includes access to continuing care in our province. That's not going to change. As I mentioned, we've added thousands of spaces and we're adding thousands more for seniors that cannot meet their costs or are eligible for the Alberta seniors' benefit, which is somewhat unusual in Canada, and have provided more than \$320 million in assistance to these seniors last year alone. That includes supplementing benefits to ensure a minimum monthly disposable income.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mobile Dialysis Service

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Minister of Health is a complete and utter disaster. Lac La Biche was promised a dialysis bus. Then it was delayed. Then we finally got a dialysis bus, but there was no staff to run it. Then the bus broke down. It might actually be funny if it wasn't a matter of life and death. Now the bus just sits in front of the hospital. This leaves me wondering: why aren't the dialysis units being permanently moved from the bus into the hospital?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of communities across the province that are served by mobile dialysis service. What this has done is that it's allowed us to extend dialysis services to communities that do not have sufficient capacity within their hospital, whether it's a question of space or staff, in order to run a full-time dialysis unit. We'll be continuing to do this as we move into the future. The hon. member's constituency has obviously benefited from that service. Home dialysis is where we are headed in the future, and that will allow us to expand additional capacity.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are other communities such as Athabasca that could use a dialysis bus, why doesn't the government simply move the dialysis units from the bus into the Lac La Biche hospital to free up the bus so it could be used elsewhere like Athabasca?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, it's wonderful that the hon. member wants to advocate for a dialysis unit in his hospital. I'm sure that my colleague the Minister of Education and others in this House would also like to see that be a possibility. Unfortunately, we

aren't able to put in place fixed dialysis units in every hospital in the province. Instead, what we've done is that we've made the most of the mobile resources that we have, including staff, many of whom today are LPNs who have been specially trained to run dialysis equipment, who are going across the province delivering this much-needed service to people who require it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that northern Albertans who require dialysis must travel up to four hours each way to receive treatment and they don't have access to a government plane, doesn't the minister care that many people are being forced to move away from their homes, communities, and loved ones?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's really difficult to understand whether this member is making a case to eliminate mobile dialysis services in the province, just trying to make a case for the hospital in his own constituency, or whether there's any glimmer of hope that he might be considering the needs of the province as a whole. Dialysis and kidney disease are a growing issue in our health care system as they are across the country. We'll continue to use mobile services to extend the dialysis capacity that we do have. I am very cognizant of the travelling that some Albertans are doing. We will be moving, as will most of the other parts of the country, to home dialysis in the future for patients for whom it is appropriate.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. The time for question period has been consumed.

We have one point of clarification at 2:36 from Airdrie, which will be dealt with in the usual spot just before Orders of the Day.

In the meantime we'll move on with hon. members making their members' statements. In 30 seconds the Clerk will call for it, and we'll start with Calgary-Glenmore.

Members' Statements

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

Pipeline Development

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to update you and the House on the important work that continues to open new markets for our province's resources. What I'm referring to is the ongoing work on new and existing pipelines. Shipping oil by pipeline is currently the safest method of transporting large volumes over large distances, and shipping it through an existing pipeline helps to minimize the environmental impact.

Last week TransCanada began the process for a west-east crude oil pipeline known as Energy East. The company filed a project description with the National Energy Board and is expected to proceed with a regulatory application in a few months. Energy East is a \$12 billion project that provides thousands of jobs across Canada. It will have the capacity to move 1.1 million barrels of oil per day to Quebec and New Brunswick.

Also, the National Energy Board has approved line 9B. Reversing line 9B has widespread benefits. It gives producers an opportunity to get Alberta oil to new markets and for eastern refineries to reduce or eliminate their dependency on higher priced foreign oil.

Our government also made our national interest determination submission to the U.S. State Department for the Keystone XL

project. The submission outlined Alberta's strong regulatory framework and proven track record in developing some of the world's most progressive environmental initiatives.

We are delivering on our government's promise to continue to advocate for important projects which support our long-term prosperity. We have been clear that opening new markets is job one for our government as it will ensure fairer prices for the resources every Albertan owns, allowing us to invest in building a stronger, more secure Alberta. As part of the building Alberta plan we continue to build new markets for our products and services so we can keep investing in what matters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Provincial Borrowing

Mr. Anderson: Budget 2014 adds over \$5 billion in debt this year and brings Alberta's total debt to over \$21 billion by 2016. The Finance minister compares debt financing for infrastructure to a home mortgage. This is a poor comparison. A home mortgage is secured by an appreciating asset worth more than the amount of the loan, and it's easy to sell. In contrast, government assets depreciate, are worth less than what they cost to build, and they are difficult to sell even if you would ever want to.

The minister also says that because interest rates are currently low, now is the time to borrow. Interest rates are indeed low, for now, but these debts will need to be regularly refinanced, and as our debt load increases, so will the available interest rate and with it billions in new annual interest charges. Have we forgotten the consequences of sustained debt financing in Europe, the U.S., and Ontario? Interest rates won't always be low, Alberta won't always enjoy record revenues, and when those realities manifest themselves, we and our children will pay a heavy price.

The minister states that folks moving to Alberta aren't bringing their roads and schools with them; thus, we must borrow to build. First off, new Albertans don't bring roads with them – that is true – but they do bring their taxes. Population growth is not a drain on our finances. It pads our bottom line. Secondly, if we must borrow for projects now to cope with high growth, what's going to change in the future so we don't have to borrow? Forecasts predict high population growth for decades. Those folks will all need schools and roads, too. If we can't build what we need today without going into debt even with record revenues, when will we ever be able to do so, and when our economy and growth rates slow, how are we going to pay the interest charges on the debt incurred during the high-growth years?

Colleagues, it's never too late to do the right thing. Let us leave our children with a legacy free from the burden of debt. We owe them nothing less.

Dr. David Schindler

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to a fellow biologist, Dr. David Schindler. Dr. Schindler recently retired as professor at the University of Alberta after 24 years of service. He's become known as a pre-eminent leader in his field of limnology, the study of freshwater ecosystems. Dr. Schindler began his career at Trent University, where I also taught, and from 1968 to 1989 he served with the federal fisheries department, where he was founding director of the experimental lakes area in Ontario. Dr. Schindler joined the faculty at the University of Alberta as the Killam Memorial chair and professor of ecology in 1989.

Among Dr. Schindler's many career accomplishments was his early work on eutrophication of freshwater lakes induced by the introduction of phosphates, principally from household detergents; on acidification of freshwater lakes by air pollutants; and on long-term effects of climate change on freshwater ecosystems. Later together with his scientific colleagues he made contributions to knowledge about the effects of the oil sands industry on contamination of the Athabasca River watershed.

Among his many honours and awards Dr. Schindler is an officer of the Order of Canada and the Alberta Order of Excellence. He was the recipient of a Rhodes scholarship, the Gerhard Herzberg gold medal, the first Stockholm water prize, the Volvo environmental prize, and the Tyler prize for environmental achievement. He's also the recipient of no less than 11 honorary degrees from North American universities and numerous other academic awards.

In an era when our federal government's muzzling of scientists has compromised their role and politics often trumps scientific fact, Dr. Schindler is an embodiment of what it means to be a scientist: to discover, to seek the truth, to rely on facts, and to disseminate knowledge to the public for the benefit of society.

Slave Lake Family Care Clinic

Ms Calahasen: Thank you to all the constituents who have contacted me in many ways to express their concerns regarding health care services in the Slave Lake region. Health care is a priority for all Albertans, and the residents of Slave Lake are no exception. The fires in Slave Lake seriously damaged the health care infrastructure and left our region with limited services. So when family care clinics were presented as a new health care model, I investigated this approach and was convinced this was the way to provide the best services holistically.

Let's look at the facts. After the fire many medical professionals were forced to leave the community. Today the Slave Lake region, serving 12,000 residents, has four full-time doctors, two locum doctors, and services are supplied seven days per week with extended hours. In fact, four new doctors are being recruited, some of whom will have specialties in obstetrics, which is a high-priority need. In addition, the FCC has seven nurse practitioners, two LPNs, two chronic disease nurses, a dietitian, a social worker, a pharmacist, two physiotherapists, a mental health and wellness co-ordinator, and an aboriginal liaison worker, people who work hard for Slave Lake.

2:50

Since the FCC opened in April 2012, there have been over 22 per cent fewer emergency department visits to the hospital because the FCC met the immediate medical needs. Fifty per cent of the patients who came in with one concern were screened for additional common health risks. Over 80 per cent of FCC patients who were surveyed said that they were happy with the care they received.

Although two physician couples chose to leave one of Slave Lake's clinics, we should not lose sight of the tremendous gains in health care services to Slave Lake residents since the fire. But, yes, there is still room for improvement. Therefore, I convened a meeting between the Tri-Council and Alberta Health Services a few weeks ago to keep all parties informed and to put a plan in place to address any shortages and to get answers to the many questions. This meeting was very successful and helped alleviate many of the concerns. As of today 10 Q and As have been posted on the AHS website, and more will be posted.

I believe that the FCC is a proven holistic model of health care. From the evidence I have seen and more to come, the residents of Slave Lake can be assured that they will continue to receive a very high level of medical services in our community.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Paralympic Winter Games

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As our province continues to celebrate the accomplishments of our athletes at the Sochi Olympics, there is another international competition in Sochi where our best athletes are representing our province and our country. I'm speaking of the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games.

Among the competitors is a Leduc native, Ms Michelle Salt, who is there to compete in parasnowboard. Michelle is one of 49 athletes representing our country in Sochi. Michelle lost 75 per cent of her right leg above the knee after a near-fatal motorcycle accident in June of 2011. But instead of allowing herself to be limited by her disability, she defied it and set herself a new goal of becoming an elite athlete.

She didn't even wait to get out of the hospital to begin. Three weeks after her accident Canadian sledge hockey player Greg Westlake visited her to advise on how to get started in Paralympic competition. Since that day Michelle has trained hard at not only recovering from the horrific injuries but at becoming an elite athlete, all the while continuing with her own real estate business as well as becoming a motivational speaker, sharing her story and her life lessons. Her struggles, her strength, and her success serve as an inspiration to us all.

I would ask that we all learn more about the para-athletes in our constituencies and support and celebrate those who are currently representing our province and country in Sochi, including the gold medal won today by Brian McKeever, a para-Nordic skier represented by the Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tax Policy

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, people say lots of things about the character of Albertans, and one that comes up often is that we value fairness. We don't like to hear that someone is getting a special deal when others are restricted from accessing that same deal. Albertans like to compete on a level playing field, and I think that's why the flat tax is really irritating folks these days. The idea that one group, the wealthy, are getting a better tax deal than everyone else rubs against the grain.

There is another situation where taxation is unfair in Alberta, and that's the nonresidential industrial property tax. This is a tax that is collected on transmission lines, pipelines, telecommunication lines, railways, cogeneration stations, and machinery and equipment. When you think about it, most of these are located in large empty spaces, but they are paid for and needed by all Albertans.

So where is the unfairness? Well, the money is mostly collected by MDs and counties, and it stays there. These sparsely populated areas are collecting \$1.4 billion for 17 per cent of the people while the other 83 per cent, living in urban areas, get to share in only \$81.5 million. Put another way, counties and MDs get 98 per cent of this tax while cities, towns, and villages get 2 per cent. It's just not fair in today's Alberta, when two-thirds of the citizens live in towns, villages, and cities.

Now, we can fix this. Today I am bringing forward Motion 501 to urge the government to distribute the revenue from the combined low expenditure assessments, the same industrial property tax, on a per capita basis across the province. I've been working on getting a better deal for urban areas for some time. In 2009 I brought forward Bill 204, which was the Provincial-Municipal Tax Sharing Act, to redistribute income tax. The government shot it down. But I'm persistent, and I'm trying again with Motion 501. Please join me in prodding the government to be fair.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, as the new chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report dated March 2014 and entitled Review of the Monetization of Natural Gas in the Province of Alberta. Copies of this report are being distributed to members today.

This review was undertaken on the committee's own initiative in accordance with Standing Order 52.07(2). I was fortunate enough to be a member of the committee during the review process, and I'm pleased to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that it was a very valuable learning experience for all those involved.

I would like to thank the members of the committee, from all sides of the House, for their co-operation and great ideas throughout the process. I would also like to thank the LAO staff for their dedication in helping the committee with this review. Finally, I would like to thank all of the stakeholders who met with us in person, over the phone, and via video conference for sharing their opinions and expertise on the subject.

The committee looks forward to receiving the government's response to the recommendations set out in this report within the 150-day period set out in Standing Order 52.09(1).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Bill 5

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2014

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 5, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2014. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 15(2) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act I'm pleased to table the 2013-14 third-quarter update on the Alberta heritage savings

trust fund. Copies were distributed to members' offices on February 26.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter from constituent Jill Sheward, and she is writing with her concerns about hearing that the government of Alberta is considering changes to the operation of the land titles system. She believes strongly that this is an essential public service and that the government is best placed to ensure protection for industry and consumers.

The second tabling that I have is an e-mail from a constituent who is very concerned at the amount that rents are going up. Her rental increases: the first year it was \$20, the second year it was another \$20, and the rental increase this year is \$90. So she is asking as a low-income person for a rental cap. She believes that it's outrageous and unjustified to have that kind of increase.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Cardston-Taber-Warner, just before you go ahead, Government House Leader, you caught my eye there because it's coming up to 3 o'clock.

Mr. Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that we go beyond 3 o'clock for the tablings.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Let's go to Cardston-Taber-Warner for tablings.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is a summary by my assistant in Taber of a conversation that she had with Mrs. Mary Sinclair of Milk River expressing her unhappiness — very unhappy — about the Premier's decision not to pay back the \$45,000 about the trip.

3:00

Secondly, an e-mail from Roger Davies, a pharmacist from Magrath, Alberta, expressing his concern about the continuing problems that small-town pharmacies are having.

Thirdly and finally, another e-mail, from Mr. Lloyd Morgan, the owner of Newcastle Towing in Drumheller, expressing his concern about the safety of tow truck operators while they're out performing their important duties, making a request that they be allowed to run a different colour of lights to enhance the awareness of the public.

I have those three with the requisite copies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wish to table documents in relation to my question to the minister today regarding expense submissions in regard to Travel Alberta. I have the requisite copies thereof.

The Speaker: Hon. members, with the exception of points of order, that concludes our Routine.

Point of Clarification

The Speaker: Now, the Member for Airdrie did rise on a point of clarification, which is in effect a point of order according to our standing orders. He wanted some clarification on a ruling that I

had made, and I'm prepared to give that now as I said I would. I'll try to do this in a matter of a few minutes if you'll allow me.

I want to draw your attention to a few specific points. First of all, in our Standing Orders, item 13, order and decorum, it states the following: "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum and decide questions of order." Harness that thought, "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum." What do I do to try to preserve order and decorum? Well, typically, when something gets out of hand, it flares up, I rise, and I say, "Hon. members, cool your jets," or words to that effect, or I just stand up and stay silent, hoping to get your attention so that you will then get silent so that we will then have the House restored. Typically, I might do that twice in a row. Today I did it three times in a row. Last week I did it many times in a row. Last week I also said that somebody will pay a penalty if you disregard the Speaker's requests, and I will penalize an entire caucus if necessary.

Today I had to put that rule, that particular admonishment, into effect. It gave me no joy to not let Cypress-Medicine Hat finish off his question. I'm sure he had a very good final supplemental that he didn't get to ask, but there was justification for it, in my mind. I'll bet you that I would get a number of other members to agree that there was quite a loud outburst from the Wildrose at a certain point, and I'll bet that I'll get the Wildrose to agree that there was an equal outburst on the government side as well. So I had to penalize one of their members to be fair, but it was justified.

I give time outs, I give warnings, and I give admonishments. A week ago I stood in this House, and I indicated that I would be doing everything I could to help preserve that order and decorum.

Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, I took no pleasure in taking away your question either today. I have just explained why, and you can read about it in *Hansard*.

I wrote you procedural letters. I wrote to you all on January 23 about Assembly procedure. I'm assuming you read it. It's a long letter, but it covers a lot of what we're trying to do in this House. I wrote to you again just before we went into session on February 11. On page 2 I gave you an explanation of decorum in the House. You all got copies of this. It says here: I'm writing to you saying decorum is referred to in chapter 13 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, and in *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, 1989, paragraph 35. And it goes on. I said: I am asking all members to review these rules before March 3 and to abide by them. I not only uttered these requests from the chair verbally, but I also put them in writing so that it would be abundantly clear exactly for a moment like this, which I was hoping we could avoid, but we couldn't.

I go on to say: the Speaker's role should not be viewed as a substitute for the individual responsibility that members must have for their own conduct. In my view, the Speaker's responsibility to the Assembly includes ensuring fairness by being consistent in interpretation and management, which leads to predictability. Members are always responsible for their own actions, and their conduct reflects primarily on them. Unfortunately, however, an individual's conduct is not viewed as a reflection of that member but also of his or her entire caucus and of the Assembly as a whole. Hopefully, all members are now very aware of this reality. The citizens of our province expect and deserve the highest standard of conduct and decorum from each one of us. I'll table a copy of that for *Hansard* later.

So there you have it. I have indicated that Speakers don't have a lot of power of enforcement, really, when it comes down to it. We can stand up and interject. We can stand up and say nothing and hope that you'll all come to order. Then when we say that we're

going to do something if you step over the line, I for one feel honour bound to act on it, and today I did.

I'm asking you again. I fully get this game that goes on in here. Fully. There are only one or perhaps two roles in all of this Chamber that I have not had the pleasure of having yet, but I've done it and seen it from the opposition's side. I know exactly how it works. I've seen it from the government's side, I've seen it from the House leader's side, and I've seen it from the whip's side, so I get what's going on here. I am prepared to let quite a bit of it go because it does get a little bit dull on occasion in here without all of that. I fully respect that you like to liven things up and spice it up. I indicated in my comments that I don't mind some thumping and heckling or whatever you want to call it that goes on during a member rising to question or speak, similarly to somebody offering an answer. It gives a little bit of added wind to the sail. I understand that.

But when it goes on and on and on throughout all 35 seconds of a question, through all 35 seconds of an answer and you can't hear a darn thing, you know what starts to happen? I start to get notes like this, and they don't just come from any one caucus. A lot of you don't know this, but – these are confidential; I don't show them to anybody, and I keep them – I hear people saying: when are you going to clamp down on people who are shouting out loud, questioning where a certain member might be? You know that the rules say we don't refer to a person's absence. They could be dealing with a family emergency, they could be dealing with a visit to the washroom, for all we know, or they could be on a trip or something else. But we don't try purposely to embarrass them by shouting out, "Where is so-and-so? Where is so-and-so?" yet this was heard. Unfortunately, it doesn't get recorded in *Hansard*, so all I have are notes to prove that by.

Then I get other members on both sides questioning and shouting out loud, "What a waste of time. What a waste of time," but *Hansard* doesn't pick it up. There are many other comments like that. Then I get members saying: well, why don't we just let the House decide how much heckling they want to permit? Right? I expect that's what Edmonton-Centre might want to speak on. I'm going to hear you in just a moment, Edmonton-Centre, because I respect where you're going to be coming from, I'm sure.

The point is that it's my job, or whoever is here in the Speaker's chair, to use some judgment. I do that. That's why I don't jump to my feet right away at the first outburst or the first major heckling or whatever. I typically let it settle down a little bit. You know me, and you know I've done that. But I also want you to get to know that when I say that I'm going to do something, you can count on me doing it. I have said it, and I will do it. We don't have much else we can do.

The final thing I'll say is this. If I don't impose some polite sanctions such as I imposed today, the only other recourse I have is to name you. Today I could have named about 30 of you. That would mean you'd be asked to leave the House. Well, that's hardly how this was designed to work, right? So I just ask you to show some respect and dignity for the institution, show some for your colleagues from your own caucus, from other caucuses. Let's get on with opposition holding the government to account and government giving the best answers they possibly can. If you don't know the answer, take it under advisement and come back with a good answer. That will help. A lot of little things like that will help.

Let me go to Edmonton-Centre. I know she has something to contribute here. I think Airdrie would like to speak, or someone on his behalf. Let's go to Edmonton-Centre first.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a question asking for clarification under Standing Order 13(2). I noticed that the Speaker indicated that he felt that in order to preserve that order and decorum under Standing Order 13(1), it was justified to levy punishment on compliant members. He recognized that the two members from which he prohibited a final supplementary question had not in fact breached any of the rules in the House. I am wondering where I could find a reference that indicated that breaches from the Speaker would be imposed upon people who in fact had not broken the rules.

3:10

As a footnote, I will admit that the Speaker is correct. I have suggested that we have a vote in the Assembly as to how much we believe that the heckling is out of place, and we can all vote on it rather than putting the Speaker in a position of having to make a decision. It is pretty well known that I disagree with the Speaker on his use of removing questions given that they are such an integral part of what the opposition does and such an integral part of holding the government to account. I think it's inappropriate to do that.

But I would like an answer to the levying of punishment on those who are innocent.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. member, everything that's printed in this book is like a rule or an order of some point. That's why it's called Standing Orders. That's why I started with that very question, and it's called 13(1). I'll dig up other examples if you like. I'll write them, and I'll send them out to you so as to not take up too much time here.

I cited in my procedural letter some spots in *Beauchesne's* that you should look at and also in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. But our very own standing orders say very clearly under 13(1) that "the Speaker shall preserve order and decorum," and it goes on to say, "... and decide questions of order." And I decided today. I decided twice today. I've already said that it gave me no joy to take away those two questions, but I wanted to make the point as seriously as I could without hurting anybody. I hope I didn't hurt either of those two members. They'll have a chance tomorrow as well. But anything that's in this book should be abided by. It's all for your own good, your own guidance, your own abidance if you will.

I will clarify further, if necessary, but I'd like to move on. We have other business to do. I know Wildrose wanted to have a quick comment on this, and then let me go to the fourth party, and we'll have that. Make them brief, if you would, please. I'll try to be brief as well.

Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the indulgence on behalf of my colleague from Airdrie under 13(2). In your comments, which were heard, you comment on how there is a certain amount of ebb and flow that you're willing to allow in the House, yet there is seemingly a bit of a blurred line as to when admonishment turns into punishment. I'm wondering if you could perhaps try to clarify for us where that line is. Hopefully, we can attempt to abide by it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Yeah. I don't know that there is a real easy way to answer your question, but take this as a hint. If you see me rise once, you know that I'm not rising to exercise. If you see me rise a second time a few minutes later, again, you know I'm not rising just to be noticed. If I then rise a third time, it's probably game over for some reason, and I have to do something at that point.

Take that as one perhaps hint. If you see me rising, or if you see me doing this while I'm seated, waving my hand up and down to silence it, like I did on the Wildrose and the Liberals and the NDs today and like I did on the government side over here as well – I motioned them down a few times to keep it quiet, keep it orderly. You all saw me do it.

I try to be fair, you know. I know it's not just all opposition that does the heckling. I understand that, and I don't like some of the heckling that goes on on the government side, either. So I try to do that. Take that as sort of a hint, if you will, deputy opposition House leader, because that's usually how it works. I'm not often going to jump up and cut somebody off and issue a sanction right off the get-go. I realize it's Monday. You haven't seen each other for four days. You missed each other. You love each other. I get all that. You want to show that expression. That would be one way to watch for it next time, okay?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have three questions that I'd ask you to consider for clarification in the course of preparing your written note to us. First, you referenced the authority under the standing orders of the Speaker to decide questions of order, and I am inquiring as to whether or not you are interpreting that to mean the order of the questions as opposed to questions of how you maintain order. I would suggest that the former interpretation is an incorrect interpretation of what the standing orders say. They aren't referring to the issue of questions in question period. But I'd ask that you clarify when you write your thing.

The Speaker: Very good question.

I'm sorry; you have a second one?

Ms Notley: I did. I have three.

The Speaker: Yeah. Go ahead.

Ms Notley: The second one was simply, again, to clarify that I'm seeking clarification further to the question asked by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, which is: where is the authority to penalize one member for the actions of another?

The third question is simply whether you can turn your mind to the issues of whether taking away a question in question period from an opposition member has the same impact to our legislative and parliamentary system as taking a question from the government and its right to so-called question itself, given the disparate opportunities for questioning government that exist between government members and opposition members and given the fact that question period is, in fact, the opposition's sole opportunity or often one of the very few opportunities to question government and that it's not the same for government members as a result, when you consider the fair disposition of penalties, whether or not you have considered what I would characterize as an unfair effect of equal imposition of that particular penalty on members of this Assembly as it relates to the members of the opposition.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. Very good questions. I'm not going to get into a long debate on this because I see that Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill wants to speak as well, and I'll allow him in just a minute but very briefly.

This is not the only opportunity to hold government to account, as you know. But it's not just opposition that holds government to account; it's also government members who try to hold government to account, too, because they are not government.

Yes, they are on the government side, but only sworn cabinet members are the government. Everyone else in here is absolutely in the same boat when it comes to questions, okay? It may not look like that to you, hon. member, but that's how it's designed to be.

Your first question about order and order: I would ask that you as a House leader for your caucus and the others to get together and actually clarify some of these standing orders for yourself so that it would be a lot clearer for me. I'm interpreting it one way, and you might be interpreting it a different way. It's just the same as supplementals. Should we allow preambles or not? Should we allow supplementary questions to have a preamble? Yes or no? I made a ruling that I will allow it for the first five questions only, the first five main questions, and then after that I won't have it. Why? Because the agreement amongst the House leaders is that supplementary questions should not have preambles. Should not. Now, I don't know how far back that goes, but I've referenced it many, many, many times, yet the House leaders haven't seen to get together and ask how to clarify that. It would be a great help if we could do that.

I forgot your third question. What was it, briefly? Do you remember what it was?

Ms Notley: It was the authority to penalize one member for the actions of another.

The Speaker: Oh, right. Thank you for that.

Well, in the absence of any other sanction that I can impose as a Speaker – and I can tell you this with great authority, having conversed many times with Speakers across Canada over the past two years – we sometimes make a rule and enforce a rule on the spot when no precedent perhaps exists. Now, I don't know if that precedent that I just set today exists anywhere. Perhaps it doesn't. But I gave you warning last week of what I would do, and that's what I had to do today. I'm sorry to have done it.

Let's go to Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. We'll give you a quick minute to comment, and then we'll move on.

Dr. Brown: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't have any issue with losing my supplemental. That's not what I'm rising for. You have argued long and hard and admonished the Assembly on many occasions with respect to these disturbances and interruptions and heckling, which take away from the discourse here. You mentioned earlier that there is nothing, in your view, short of naming these individuals that you can do other than warning them, but I would say that there is nothing in the standing orders, there is nothing in parliamentary conduct that requires you to stick with the speaking order that's given to you by the various parties.

I would say that the way to bring some discipline back into this House is to refuse to recognize individuals who have been egregious in their interruptions, whether it's on one side of the House or the other, refuse to recognize them for the next 24 hours or the next day in the House, and in that way maybe we can achieve some better discipline in the Chamber. I don't think that you need to be restricted to the sanction of naming somebody. You can just simply refer to those individuals who are next in the speaking order and refuse to recognize them.

3:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Very briefly, in 30 seconds: let me just tell you that I gave that warning last year, and I'm just waiting for the opportunity to remind people here again, and that's what I will be doing. I will have to do something if this House continues to go into disorder. Now, if you want to take up

Edmonton-Centre's suggestion, as House leaders get your heads together and figure out how much heckling you think we should allow.

Maybe we should bring in some sort of a barometer, thermometer type of apparatus, a noise machine, that says when it hits this level here. Well, I'm being facetious, obviously. But you have to leave that to the good judgment of the chair, and I do my best to allow as much of it as I can, to keep it lively and spontaneous but also to maintain law, order, good discipline, and good conduct so that we can be role models that are admired in the community, not those who are boycotting having their students attend because of our ill behaviour. Okay?

Let us move on, then.

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, I would rather that you name me than punish someone else in here because of what I've done. I'd offer that to you. You name me; don't punish somebody else.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I'd be happy to do that on the next occasion.

Orders of the Day

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

Bill 201 Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to rise today to speak to Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014. The purpose of Bill 201 is to amend the Agricultural Pests Act in order that a tolerance level for *Fusarium graminearum* of 0.5 per cent be accepted for Alberta seed and feed. This is an issue that is important to my constituency as well as many communities across Alberta. *Fusarium* is an air- and soil-borne toxin that is classified as a pest under the act. Specifically, *Fusarium* head blight is the fungal disease caused by the presence of the *Fusarium graminearum* toxin.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

It is environmentally specific in that it flourishes in high heat and humidity during the flowering stage of cereal grains. If the weather conditions are dry and hot during this stage, the fungus will not develop. Once the toxin had infected the crops in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, it began to spread to the southern regions of our province. Mitigation and best practices have been in place in hoping to lessen the spread across the prairies. What we do know about the current regulation is that section 10 details that it is the duty of the inspector, who is usually the county ag field man, "who finds on any premises evidence of an infestation of any crop" to "notify persons engaged in the growing, transporting or processing of any crop... affected by the infestation." Theoretically, the landowner or producer is supposed to destroy the crop even if there are trace amounts of this fungus. This is not happening, Madam Speaker, nor should it.

The next person in the system who may see signs of *Fusarium* is working at the local seed cleaning plant. Some plants strictly enforce the rules, and others are less rigid. In other words, at the present time in Alberta the rules are not being consistently

enforced. Those plants that do enforcement will reject seed that has trace amounts. If they find just one seed in 200, they will reject it. That producer has the ability to take his seed to another seed cleaning plant where the same level of enforcement is not in place.

Our current regulation is unrealistic and unenforceable. *Fusarium graminearum* is here in Alberta, as it is in most of the rest of North America and Europe. Madam Speaker, our current regulation is not helpful to the success of Alberta farmers, growers, and producers and puts our province at a noticeable disadvantage economically. This economic disadvantage is exacerbated by the fact that strong agricultural provinces like Saskatchewan and Manitoba treat the issue differently. Growers in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are free to sell their seed with acceptable levels. What is acceptable? The Canadian Grain Commission allows a range of .2 per cent to .5 per cent for export, depending on the type of grain. Other countries allow in the range of .5 per cent, thus the reason for my bill. Best management practices indeed help to mitigate and deal with the presence of *Fusarium* but will never eliminate it completely. In order to help farmers, that would be in keeping with the zero-tolerance standard. Because of the very nature of *Fusarium*, expecting to have an absolutely pure and natural environment free of toxins is almost impossible.

For example, Albertans are being proactive in similar issues, with the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus. The people at Genome Alberta are heading up a collaborative Canadian effort to develop a vaccine for this deadly pig disease. It has recently been discovered in Ontario and Manitoba. Approximately 20 per cent of hogs in the United States are infected. It is devastating to the hog industry. Its effects on the hog industry are being described as similar to BSE in cattle. PED virus is not here in Alberta yet, but we are being proactive in leading the team to discover measures to mitigate its spread.

Madam Speaker, I wonder how we can expect a seed grown and developed in a natural environment to be completely free of bacteria, pests, or insects. This leads me to believe that there is almost nothing that is truly pure or free from something in the environment since it is an open ecological system and different factors are consistently interacting with one another in a series of symbiotic relationships.

To explain this line of reasoning a little further, Madam Speaker, I ask you and my fellow hon. members to think about wine. Now, wine has a familiar toxin in it. Arsenic is found in almost all types of white and red wine in trace amounts. Many of us enjoy a glass of wine from time to time, whether it be with dinner or surrounded by friends and colleagues. As my chemist son-in-law tells me, the poison is in the dose. In the case of wine and many other foods and beverages, there are regulated acceptable levels of toxins, but this presence of arsenic, a toxin, has not stopped many of us from drinking it altogether.

Madam Speaker, the level of toxin that causes *Fusarium* to occur is already regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. This means that in very small amounts *Fusarium* is tolerated. There have been many studies that deal with the ingestion of contaminated foods and feeds, yet we still do not allow our farmers, landowners, and processors to sell their crops that may have trace amounts of it.

We know that *Fusarium* will continue to spread. We know that other prairie provinces allow for the presence of *Fusarium* in their wheat and barley. We know that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency regulates levels of toxins present in cereal grains, corn, seed, and crops so that it is not harmful to humans or for livestock consumption. Simply not allowing for *Fusarium*-infected kernels

to be present in our agricultural products is not a sound or reliable management technique.

So I ask: what should our practices be? The Alberta Wheat Commission has expressed its concern for the zero-tolerance position, feeling that realistically it is unattainable. They have also begun investigative work to propose a reasonable tolerance level based on sound science.

I have a letter of support from Lethbridge county. I would like to quote part of this letter.

We strongly support the amendment as it would not deem fusarium head blight a pest or nuisance unless it is found at a concentration of greater than 0.5% in any plant, seed, crop, vegetation or other matter.

This amendment would aid seed producers in the province by creating a tolerance level on seed that could be legally sold. Seed producers would also be given the opportunity to propagate seed that contains small amounts of fusarium head blight in an effort to create resistant varieties.

I will be tabling five copies of this letter at the conclusion of my remarks.

Madam Speaker, the rural Alberta economic footprint is \$77.4 billion annually, and because of initiatives from this government in collaboration with our hard-working Alberta farmers and growers, we are well positioned for an even greater growth across many agricultural sectors. But our position as an agricultural leader could be compromised by dated practices like that of the zero-tolerance position. Given the current reality regarding grain transportation in our province, for which the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development has advocated strongly on behalf of Albertans, we must give our producers every advantage possible.

3:30

Madam Speaker, I understand that Bill 201 may not garner full support from all of my colleagues in this House. If anything I am thankful that I have the opportunity to bring this important agricultural topic to the forefront of discussion with our constituents, friends, and family.

Alberta has a reputation as a world-class supplier of food, energy, and other agricultural commodities. With Bill 201 I only ask that we begin the discussion on this zero-tolerance practice to ensure that we maintain and enhance our reputation today and into the future.

With that, Madam Speaker, I conclude my comments. I look forward to hearing the remainder of the debate on Bill 201. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, would you please table that letter from Lethbridge county tomorrow during the regular time for tablings? Thank you.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First off, I commend the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for bringing this issue up. It is key. With seed producers in my riding it's one of the big things and in Alberta generally. We're losing huge revenue by our zero tolerance, which is something that I don't feel is obtainable as a grain producer myself.

The member brought this up, and it touches – I mean, she hit everything quite clearly on it. A lot of seed plants don't have a testing process. Some do; some don't. I was a member of the Blackie district seed cleaning plant for over 15 years. About 10 or 12 years ago we brought in testing for Fusarium before you could clean it. Now, that's just one. Within 15 miles of that there's another seed cleaning plant where you do not have to test before

you clean. So therein lies the problem. You have producers with not exactly the same set of rules, and trying to go along with it – not that anybody is trying to shortcut anything. But unless the seed cleaning plants, for instance, are all playing by the same rules, producers that are cleaning their own seed, whether they plan to or not, are not checking for this, and then they also could be planting seed with Fusarium.

Now, this goes back economically to all the seed growers in the province, who obviously have a lot at stake here. We're the only province in Canada that has a zero tolerance on Fusarium for seed growers. Now, this puts us at an economic loss because other seed growers in Saskatchewan, Manitoba don't have that on there.

With that, I think we've got to look at the big picture, you know, in simple math. To buy No. 1 wheat for seed right now is running about 12 and a half dollars a bushel for certified seed. Now, the certified seed growers put a lot more time into producing their grain. As far as the cleaning process, when they're going to clean out augers, combines for seed, anybody that farms can understand the challenges of making sure that the varieties don't get crossed over. In saying that, they obviously have to charge a premium for what they do to have certified seed. When you buy certified seed, you get a little blue tag that tells you the amount of weeds that are in that, what the standards are. I think this could be something that could be worked into this motion, to be able to make sure that it's something that's followed through on the enactment part of it.

The biggest thing is to let producers know what they're buying. Now, if they know that they could be buying a seed that has up to .5 per cent Fusarium in it, that would give them the opportunity to decide whether they do or don't want to buy it. In this province it's a very divisive argument. Every MLA in here that is in an agricultural growing sector has probably heard from producers on both sides of the coin. Some are saying: "Okay. We don't have it. Don't allow it into our area." It's almost a north-south split.

Last fall it came up as a motion at the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. It was a very heated debate. People got up there and got talking about how we don't have it in northern Alberta. The argument could be taken that there is probably Fusarium in northern Alberta. There are some tests that show it. It's just that if you're not looking for something, you don't tend to generally test for it.

Not that they're bad producers, but heat and humidity is the key to how this disease gets transferred around. It's a fungal disease. It's in the soil, and it's also airborne. So what happens is that strong winds, which we do have in this province once in a while, can transfer it over from somebody that's doing best management practices on their farm. They're treating their seed. They're making sure their rotation isn't tight on anything that's close to that in a cereal program.

The problem with Fusarium is that we're also starting to get it in potatoes. In southern Alberta, where we have our large irrigation areas, these are things we need to look at. There's also Fusarium in canola. It goes back to heat and humidity. That's the whole element of how this product moves along this disease.

I guess one of the key things, to me anyway, is that we have the fight of the north-south. It's not healthy for the province to be split that way, but it does come down to that. I commend the member for pulling this up because it's pretty gutsy for anybody north of Red Deer to bring up this topic and fight for it as she is. So I commend her for that.

Now, one of the things there that she talked about is how the Alberta ag service boards are – in all honesty, this is something that could be done through the municipalities. Each municipality has the process of what they decide, they deem what to check for.

The ag field men and their society are the ones who go out and actually – if you get a weed management act or a pest act, they're the ones that enforce it.

So the way to do this to keep, I guess, all parties happy is to be able to have it where each municipality would decide how to enforce it or not enforce it, be kind of that happy medium. Right now I'll guarantee that anybody in this House that has had calls on it has had it 50-50. We've had people call adamantly against it, saying, "We need to stick to zero per cent or we'll end up like Manitoba and we'll lose millions every year on production because of the Fusarium in there," or we have people saying: "Let's be honest about this. Let's look at this as a proactive way to deal with it rather than reactive."

Now, when you get into Fusarium, it's a mycotoxin. I'll have to go to my speaking notes here because I'm past the – we're into the smart stuff which doesn't roll off my head quite as fast. The disease has been spread widely due to extensive planting of highly susceptible varieties. So into the varieties side again – you know, I compare it a little bit to a flu shot – in order to be able to get a vaccine back on something, you need to be able to know what you have and give the plant that so it knows how to fight it.

We get into GMO talks of how – I'm not even getting into that dance. But genetically modified grains, food, anything like that, you introduce a trait into the genes, and then you figure out how that goes against it. We use it, and everybody talks immediately about Roundup and canola and things like that.

Papaya has had it for years. Back in 1985, I think it was, papaya had a ring in it. It's a fruit, so they had this ring that was coming in and eating and causing the whole – going from like 56 million pounds a year of papaya down to 26 because they wouldn't introduce this whole vaccine stream into it. It's not that we're against genetically modifying anything; it's figuring out what we're going to do economically to make sure that we're a viable province.

To me, this is one of those things we need to really figure out. We're getting hurt huge because we're the only province in Canada that has a zero tolerance on it. The seed growers in Saskatchewan automatically have an economic gain on us because they don't have to worry about it. I'm not saying we throw the reins in the cart and we just let the horses run wild with it and we don't have any kind of a standard. We need to have some kind of a standard in there, and I think .5 is attainable.

When you test for Fusarium, there are different tests. There's the old plate test. Fusarium is on the outside of the seed, so making sure that the seed plant place, the laboratory that's doing it, has zero Fusarium in it to begin with. It's airborne, so if they're testing numerous amounts – I'll go the north versus south. Some of the laboratories, for instance, if they have grain samples coming in from the south, where they have higher tolerances of Fusarium in it and they have that in their lab – I'm not saying that they're doing a bad job. I'm just saying that the probability is there that a trace amount of Fusarium could be just lingering in their lab when they bring in a seed sample from a certified seed grower.

That certified seed grower can have a grain bin, a 5,000-bushel grain bin at, say, \$10 for easy math. Fifty thousand dollars worth of grain is in there. Just a trace amount of Fusarium on that test will roll out to the fact that they can't sell that as seed. Now, these are people's livelihoods. These are people that put a lot of time and money into what they're doing, and they make sure that they do the high-end job that they do.

Like everything we have in this province, I don't think we're second to none on anything that we do. I think we always show that we know what we're doing and we have the best product to sell and market out there. That's what makes our agricultural industry at the \$77 billion cash receipts that we have. It also rolls

out the fact that it's the largest renewable resource that we have in this province. I think we're all stewards of the land, anybody that is in agriculture or is tied to the agricultural sector, because, let's be honest, it's not just the farmer or the rancher that's tied to agriculture.

When we look back to the \$50,000 bin of wheat versus if it has a trace amount – it doesn't even have to be the .5; it can be down to just a trace amount, and as long as it has that, it can't be sold as seed. So we have the seed growers in this province now that put their livelihood on the line every year, and they're sitting there, and they've just gone from a \$50,000 value on a 5,000-bushel bin rolling it down to, you know, \$3 or \$4 a bushel for it, and then it goes to \$20,000. Well, you sit there, and that's a \$30,000 economic hit just on one bin of grain because it has a trace in it.

3:40

So I think we really need to sit down and look at this, and that's why I'm supporting this member on this. I think we really need to pull our head out of the sand on this and figure out that zero isn't obtainable and it's not something that we have right now. If it means that municipalities are going to be able to sit there and decide amongst themselves to do this, which is their choice – and it goes back to local decision-making. We make the legislation so it's available. We don't say that all the municipalities have to follow that. It's up to them to do their own decision-making on it. Then that would be able to allow everybody from the north to the south to decide whether they want to have a zero per cent or a .5 per cent or a .25 per cent. They could figure that out with their own ag servicemen, the ag field men, what they're going to do on it. So I think there are means and ways around this so that it could work for everybody.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today and speak to Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014, that is being brought forward by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. The purpose of Bill 201 is to amend the Agricultural Pests Act in order that a tolerance level for Fusarium graminearum of .5 per cent be accepted for Alberta seed and feed.

Given the airborne nature of Fusarium and its ability to spread rapidly from field to field, management practices have been developed in order to help mitigate its spread. After extensive public consultation in 2002 Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development released the first comprehensive Alberta Fusarium graminearum management plan. The purpose of the plan is to limit the introduction, escalation, spread, and economic impact of Fusarium. This management plan requires that all cereal grain intended for seed be tested and certified free of Fusarium. Land-owners and seed, grain, and feed producers have the responsibility to control, destroy, or prevent the establishment of Fusarium as outlined in the act and respective regulations. Additionally, it is their responsibility to practise and adhere to all management practices to meet the objectives of the management plan.

The plan works to complement the legislative authority by the act to enforce control for declared pests in Alberta. Fusarium has been a declared pest since 1999, and the enforcement of control is delegated to the local municipalities and carried out by agricultural field men. The purpose of the Alberta Fusarium management plan is awareness, not enforcement. Instead, the agricultural field men work with producers to ensure they have the

information to protect themselves and their neighbours from the effects of Fusarium. Despite efforts in the motion by the management plan, it appears as though Fusarium has continued to spread throughout Alberta, making its way north, where it had not previously been found.

Madam Speaker, according to Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development projected total losses due to Fusarium-infected seed could possibly be as high as \$64 million. This projected loss figure could especially impact central and east-central Alberta as well as the irrigated districts of southern Alberta.

Madam Speaker, best practices for dealing with Fusarium have two objectives. The first objective is for cereal corn producers to limit the introduction, escalation, spread, and economic impact of Fusarium in Alberta. Here the plan suggests that growers should always use healthy seed with no detectable levels of Fusarium to avoid introducing the pathogen into their production area. The plan also recommends that growers request a seed health report that shows testing results specifically for Fusarium.

The second objective is for cereal and corn producers to limit the introduction, escalation, spread, and economic impact of Fusarium in Alberta intended for use as feed, bedding, or industrial use. If Fusarium-infested grain will be used as livestock feed, the management plan recommends that grain samples be checked for mycotoxin levels through a lab analysis. Knowledge of the mycotoxin levels will produce guidance as to whether the grain is suitable for feed, especially for more sensitive animals such as swine.

Feed grain, grain products, and straw suspected of being infested with Fusarium can be fed to finishing cattle, which will aid in the elimination of the pathogen, or they can be composted where compost temperatures reach 60 to 70 degrees Celsius for at least two weeks. If feed grain or grain products are spilled at any time during the feeding and handling process, producers are encouraged to consider recovering and composting.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, a sound management plan and following best practices play an important role in mitigating the spread of Fusarium. This management plan strives to work hand in hand with the zero tolerance for Fusarium accepted across Alberta. However, despite best efforts in employing management practices, Fusarium continues to spread across Alberta, even reaching northern areas, where until recently Fusarium was not present.

Madam Speaker, there are strong views on both sides of the Fusarium debate. Farmers here in Alberta are using best management practice to eliminate the escalation of Fusarium, yet these methods of practice are not working to eliminate the presence of Fusarium, and some argue that Fusarium might not ever be eradicated from Alberta's fields. Bill 201 would amend the Agricultural Pests Act to include a .5 per cent tolerance level for Fusarium, recognizing that Fusarium is here today and that we should employ measures that keep our agricultural products safe and allow farmers to sell their seeds and feed at the same time.

Madam Speaker, Alberta has a reputation as a world-class supplier of food and other agricultural commodities. Bill 201 will help ensure that farmers are able to compete with other agricultural jurisdictions who do not have a zero-tolerance restriction and maintain our position as a world-class agricultural supplier. I commend the hon. member for bringing this issue to the forefront of private members' business in the Legislature today, and I would encourage all members to support this bill and allow our farmers to compete on an equal footing with other western Canada producers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I speak of something that I am more familiar with, because it's from my heart and from my roots in Drumheller and Stettler, where I'm farming and where I've lived my whole life. Actually, to the evidence of some people in this room, I do know something of Fusarium because I experienced it first-hand on our farm way back in 1986. We were experiencing high rainfall in the area, which is unusual for the diverse area and the special areas. We had a crop of durum wheat that was coming to full flower and full development, but there were no seeds forming in the head. I was fortunate enough at that time to have a crop consultant who was born and raised in Ireland and some parts of England, where he had taken his training. He actually had experienced this calamity, I guess you could call it, in the crop, so he came and inspected the crop.

No one else in the constituency, no one else in the area, actually, even knew what was going on there, and it was a complete irregularity because of the moisture conditions, because of the cropping conditions. We were trying to be the best stewards of our land, the best stewards of our farm, and the best stewards of agriculture in that community, but we were still stricken with a calamity. The gentleman told us that there was, simply, absolutely nothing we could do. It's kind of a disheartening feeling to have that happen, to have someone come out who appeared and showed us his great qualifications and said that there was something the matter with our crop and that there was actually nothing we could do. There wasn't anything modern that we could spray on it. There wasn't a seed treatment that we could have put on it at the time. We simply had to harvest the crop and take it off for feed and dispose of it in a safe manner through our cattle, albeit at a low level. He explained to us the potential contamination or the feed levels that we could not use with our cattle and which would create a situation where the pregnant cattle would abort their calves.

This has been an interesting point with me because I believe that in this case potentially we should try and achieve zero tolerance. In the real world zero tolerance in this case simply isn't achievable, simply isn't attainable. I would like to stand by the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock on her point of bringing this forward in a regulated, correct fashion and that we should be aware and publicly aware, in a legislative fashion, that this calamity needs to be addressed. It's important to the stewardship of agriculture in Alberta. It's important as a member of a province in the dominion, with neighbouring Saskatchewan, neighbouring Manitoba, and neighbouring British Columbia, that we bring this forward in a proper method so we can go forward in a commercial fashion.

3:50

I also remember some many years ago when this Fusarium outbreak occurred in Manitoba. Some may remember a certain Canadian organization – the initials I'll just call CWB – that was trying to market grain, and they did not have a proper designation for Fusarium-infected grain. It was unfortunate that this government entity was so clumsy as to not be able to handle this Fusarium-infected grain, and therefore the farmers in southern Manitoba, who had direct access across the American border and could have received cash value for their grain, were not allowed because of this regulation by this clumsy, awkward, archaic – could I call it old-fashioned? I don't know how many other prominent negative adjectives I could have given to it – organiza-

tion that has simply now become voluntary thanks to a certain federal Conservative government. I'm pleased to have had that happen.

Again, I'd like to reiterate to the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock that I think she's on the right track here. It may prove out down the road that this level of infection will be a wedge level, but it needs to be done in such a fashion, to the Member for Little Bow, that the grain is not simply rejected, that this seed lot would not simply be rejected because of any trace finding of the disease in the seed.

I'd like to explain, too, on sort of a more understandable level that .5 per cent relates to 1 seed in 200, and 200 is about the equivalent of two handfuls of seed or one litre of seed. One seed is a very small amount in that. The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is facing this problem head-on, so we're going forward in that fashion.

It's also bringing forward a position that's of great difficulty for the provincial seed cleaning co-ops going forward. It's been a cause of great concern amongst those organizations. The Member for Little Bow has brought forward an example that some co-op facilities in one region will accept it and that others down the road would not. In this modern day of super Bs and five-axle transportation units it's just not acceptable to have a bi- or a multistandard. We need to have a single standard going forward there.

Again, seed quality and seed determination and good stewardship in agriculture going forward should be the goal of this province, and I believe that is the goal of this side of the House. Sometimes we have questions with regard to directions from the other side of the House, but I think today is the day that I can stand with the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and be in agreement.

With that, I'd relinquish the floor to other speakers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014, being brought forward by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. It's not often that we're afforded the opportunity to speak on behalf of the agricultural community in regard to bill procedure, so I'm very pleased to do so today.

I stand here to discuss measures and regulations that are in place in various other jurisdictions, both in Canada and the United States, regarding the contaminant *Fusarium graminearum* among crop farmers, producers, and growers. Various jurisdictions have prudently engaged in *Fusarium* management procedures in an attempt to reduce the spread of this airborne disease that negatively impacts agricultural seed crops across the nation. Studies have shown that because of the prevalence of the *Fusarium* head blight and the ease with which it spreads, zero-tolerance measures are neither realistic nor desired by some of the various stakeholders whom this disease affects. As such, there are no other jurisdictions in Canada or the United States that practice a zero-tolerance *Fusarium* management system as seen here in our province.

Saskatchewan guidelines for *Fusarium*-infected seed indicate that farmers are not permitted to bring seed into regions where *Fusarium* is not common unless the seed lot has been tested and is free of disease. Seed infected with less than 5 per cent *Fusarium* can be planted back into regions where the *Fusarium* species has already been established as there will be disease inoculums present in the region; for example, infected cereal residue in

neighbouring fields. Agricultural guidelines available to farmers in Saskatchewan also indicate that seed infected with more than 5 per cent *Fusarium* may have other quality problems and is therefore a risk for farmers choosing to plant it.

Madam Speaker, use of a seed treatment is advised if *Fusarium* is present at levels greater than 2 to 3 per cent. This then becomes a situation where farmers' discretion is required to determine the risk they are willing to take in planting crops with *Fusarium* present. This situation also establishes a buyer-beware practice and suggests Saskatchewan farmers should always check lab reports for the condition of seeds before purchasing.

Saskatchewan agricultural guidelines also state that seed with up to 5 per cent total *Fusarium* species infection should be safe to plant. However, a level of 5 per cent total *Fusarium* infection could still result in significant seed blight if the seed treatment is not used. Madam Speaker, seed blight in this case refers to the term "*Fusarium* head blight," the disease name for the infection which we speak of today.

Further, Saskatchewan guidelines for seed testing are extensive, and it is recommended to have seed tested at an accredited laboratory to assess the level of seed-borne pathogens. At this time *Fusarium* testing is only an advisory test as it is not recognized as an accredited test by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. However, Saskatchewan labs make an effort to follow standardized procedures for isolating and identifying *Fusarium* species as there are various different ones that exist.

Experts in Saskatchewan suggest farmers buy only certified seed that has documented good quality. It's also mentioned that certified seed, according to the federal Seeds Act, must meet standards for germination, purity, and true loose smut but not for *Fusarium* infection. Therefore, again, the motto is buyer beware when anyone is purchasing seed. Farmers should ask to see the lab certificate before purchasing seed. That's just good practice.

Another important management practice is extensive research. Research as to the effectiveness of seed treatments to control seed-borne *Fusarium* in provincial fields is ongoing. In Saskatchewan research conducted in this province has found that seed treated with fungicides still develops lesions on the crowns or roots as a result of seed-borne *Fusarium* infections. Some researchers in this province recommend the use of a seed treatment as good insurance. Therefore, seed treatments may not eradicate seed-borne *Fusarium* completely but are still important management practices to protect against seed blight and minimize pathogen buildup in the soil that may lead to infection in subsequent years. It should be noted that seed treatments will not prevent *Fusarium* head blight from developing later on in the season due to residue-borne disease inoculums from neighbouring fields as the *Fusarium* disease is airborne and difficult to contain with 100 per cent assurance.

Under Saskatchewan's Pest Control Act all persons must "take measures to destroy, control and prevent the spread of all pests on any land or other premises owned, occupied or controlled" by them. Although *Fusarium* is not listed as a pest under the pest declaration regulations, it is still expected that farmers administer similar measures to ensure the containment of *Fusarium* as best they can. Doing so ensures that they receive the best possible yields from crops planted on their land and distributed to customers.

4:00

Concluding Saskatchewan's jurisdictional overview, I hope it's clear to everyone here today that measures in our own neighbouring province include buyer-beware standards as well as very

extensive research as to how Fusarium is best contained and prevented.

Now, Manitoba shares a similar jurisdictional background regarding Fusarium. Fusarium is not regulated, and therefore no tolerance has been set for seeds, and there is no difference between classes of seeds. Manitoba has released preventative measures regarding harvest techniques to reduce the presence of Fusarium as well as storage precautions and feeding guidelines. Along with their neighbours in Saskatchewan they emphasize the importance of seed testing and encourage the education of both producers and consumers.

Manitoba has the Plant Pests and Diseases Act. Although Fusarium is not stated in this act, the legislation does stipulate as follows: "No person owning, operating, leasing, or managing a nursery shall keep or have, or offer for exchange or sale . . . any diseased or [infected] plant or seed." The minister does have the power through regulation to designate a species, animal, or insect to be pests under the act. However, at present there are no regulations that outline Fusarium as being a pest.

As we have just reviewed jurisdictions within Canada with the highest Fusarium disease prevalence, we cannot ignore relevant agricultural jurisdictions in the United States. In North Dakota Fusarium head blight first became a significant problem in 1993 and since that time has contributed to over \$5 billion in losses. North Dakota State University has undertaken significant research activities and has developed and released three varieties of wheat that have some degree of Fusarium resistance or tolerance. Farmers are aware of the Fusarium head blight risk and are active in pursuing these types of seed varieties, according to the grain management experts in the area. All preventative measures are, again, at the producers' and consumers' discretion, and there are no regulations pertaining to the level of Fusarium found in seeds.

North Dakota does, however, show numerous initiatives that aim to lessen the financial burden on farmers and various other consumers. The United States wheat and barley initiative funds approximately 130 scientists in 22 states and Mexico who are collaborating to mitigate the Fusarium head blight epidemic. Funding for the program is obtained from earmarked funds through the United States Department of Agriculture and administered by Michigan State University.

Tolerance initiatives show that the issue of Fusarium head blight is strongly noticed among federal and state organizations. Experts in North Dakota have suggested that the regulation of Fusarium would be an unrealistic action because of its relatively high level of prevalence.

North Dakota also recommends multiple management strategies in order to mitigate the spread of Fusarium. These management strategies include seed treatment, tillage practices, crop rotation, and the use of fungicides. The state of North Dakota as well as other agricultural jurisdictions within the United States have never practiced a zero-tolerance policy regarding the level of Fusarium found in seed crops, as is the case here in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I hope that today I've been able to bring a heightened level of understanding and acknowledgement to the jurisdictional measures and regulations found in agricultural communities as they pertain to Fusarium. I look forward to hearing the remainder of the debate on Bill 201.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the chance to rise and discuss Bill 201, Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head

Blight) Amendment Act, 2014. I, too, have learned a lot since this bill was brought forward and talked about. It has been very, very interesting as I represent a large farming constituency as well, with huge amounts of irrigation land and large amounts of dry land and large amounts of ranching. I think I would say that at this point most of my constituents are very, very split as to what the outcome of this act should be. I've also noticed that in my caucus we're on a similar track, a lot of differences of opinions, and we've had a lot of great discussions. With that, of course, I commend the member for bringing this forward and giving us the opportunity to discuss it.

I understand that Manitoba loses somewhere between \$60 million and \$150 million a year because of Fusarium graminearum in their crops, a terrible situation that's led to where, I understand, many of their smaller animals, chickens and pigs, cannot eat the grain and digest it and flourish or even survive. Cows are more tolerant, but it's still not great. I understand that we're in a situation where trucks and trucks and tonnes and tonnes of contaminated grain get hauled both ways: our grain to their smaller animals so that they can continue their livestock industry from Alberta, and Manitoba grain to our Feedlot Alley and our feedlots and cattle industry, which have a higher tolerance. No doubt this costs our overall economy. This costs a lot of money overall when it just isn't kept local and within that old hundred-mile rule.

I understand, though, that a serious outbreak of Fusarium graminearum occurred in Manitoba in 1993. The province focused on developing resistant varieties rather than trying to control the spread of the disease, and there's a lot of thinking out there that this may have led to the continuation of Manitoba's problem, the growth of Fusarium in Manitoba, and \$60 million to \$100 million a year in lost value of crops.

I'm also told that there are nine or 10 varieties of seed right now from Saskatchewan and Manitoba that are resistant at no level or a lower level than one-half of 1 per cent, that could be part of the process of preventing the spread of Fusarium. Although I have tremendous empathy for farmers that have developed seed and have contaminated seed and cannot sell it, cannot plant it, it may not be the best long-term solution for us to keep the spread of Fusarium as low as possible or even end it totally.

A lot of my constituents that I've talked to have spent lots of time telling me about proper farm management. The four-cycle crop rotation is the best way to solve the problem, apparently. As the crop grows out of the ground, it picks it up and ends up in head blight, and just a proper rotation can go a long way to solving this problem.

As others said, the fact that we've had some wet, humid springs has caused some problems, and hence in parts of my constituency where irrigation is strong, that's why the irrigated lands would have a bigger problem. In parts of the south, where we don't normally have a lot of moisture, it maybe wouldn't be as big a problem.

Interestingly, I had a town hall on the weekend in Schuler-Hilda. One of the things we talked about was this bill. It's interesting to them because a number of them have land on both sides of the border. Most years go by without any impact from Fusarium, but a lot of them are aware that it could have a huge impact, and they had again some split ideas about: yeah, let's accept a low amount, and let's try to do something. Others, again, felt the best thing was to make sure that we had zero tolerance.

I'm spending a lot of time talking to a couple of people who are very, very strong agriculture producers, and they're telling me and assuring me that the provincial agricultural service boards, the committee, rather, set from these 71 boards, and the Alberta

Association of Agricultural Fieldmen and the majority of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties are opposed to this change. They believe that the pest control act is best as it is now, without allowing for any tolerance of Fusarium.

I've spent quite a bit of time talking to our agriculture critic about it, and he's highlighted for me the pros and cons and the differences and the different aspects. He has highlighted that there is a split, and there are strong components both ways. We talked about different zones in the province, which most Albertans do not feel will work, because we are all one Alberta. How do you enforce that? How do you draw the line? We've talked about different types of seeds, and it was good to hear that there are the nine or 10 varieties that have been proven effective with resistance at a lower level. Hopefully, that's the case, and hopefully that will solve our long-term problem.

Again, I'm concerned that Manitoba attempted to handle it in this way and is now ending up with \$60 million to \$100 million in losses annually in their agriculture products from grain. Interestingly, we just did a bit of a grain tour in Peace River country, where we had approximately 95 people come out and talk to us about provincial issues, rail issues, and that kind of thing. One of the things I heard in all four communities – Sexsmith, Spirit River, Falher, and Fairview – was that more grain is grown in . . .

4:10

Some Hon. Members: Falher.

Mr. Barnes: Falher? Thank you.

An Hon. Member: You have to say it with a French accent.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Thank you for that.

They talked about how there's more grain grown in Peace River country than there is in all of Manitoba, which was absolute news to me. I lived in Manitoba till I was 13 years old and, like Saskatchewan, remember driving by wheat field after wheat field that looked very, very productive. It was actually only my second time in Peace River country, and there was tons of snow, but I was very, very impressed with how beautiful it was and how productive that area could be when I saw the wide, flat areas and all that moisture. That could go some distance.

I also took some time, and I have from the Canadian and the Alberta governments Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) of Cereals: A Disease of Concern For Alberta. Some of the things it says for managing Fusarium head blight are, number one, to plant seed with no detectable level of Fusarium graminearum. This prevents the accidental introduction of FG into noninfested fields. I presume that that is one of the big issues here for a disease that's spread by air and by soil and accidental infection in seeding plants, the unintended consequences of what can happen from neighbour to neighbour or district to district. At one point that, obviously, seemed to be a way to make sure that we didn't head the Manitoba way of \$60 million to \$100 million in annual losses.

Increase seeding rates. Less tillering leads to more uniform and shorter flowering periods, which minimizes the length of time during which heads are susceptible to Fusarium infection. Less tillering means less variation in crop growth stage, which may improve fungicide performance.

It talks about variety. Varieties with some degree of resistance are available, but they do not eliminate the risk. Consult annual provincial variety guides for current recommendations of FHB-resistant varieties.

Then it talks about the crop rotation that I just mentioned. Avoid planting new cereal crops next to a field where a Fusarium-infested cereal or corn resides. It's obviously picked up through

the air or picked up through the soil. Stagger planting dates. It talks about doing that to prevent the spread.

Irrigation management. Limit irrigation during the flowering period to reduce humidity in the canopy.

Fungicide application. Provide suppression only. May only reduce mycotoxin levels. Application at early heading and prior to Fusarium infection is critical.

Harvest management. Combine adjustment and postharvest management.

These are all this pamphlet really illustrates.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Would you please table five copies of the document that you were reading from tomorrow when we have tablings. Thank you very much.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to follow the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. I'm sorry you couldn't finish.

I'm honoured to rise today, Madam Speaker, to continue debate on Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014, which has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, and I promise I will refrain from referencing arsenic levels in wine as that's probably not good for anybody to think about.

This bill deals with a topic that not everyone may be familiar with but should be aware of, Fusarium graminearum. Fusarium graminearum results in Fusarium head blight disease, which continues to be found primarily in southern Alberta's irrigated corn and wheat fields as well as farms in the Peace River district. Bill 201 seeks to reclassify Fusarium graminearum as a nuisance as opposed to a pest as well as to accept a .5 per cent tolerance level. This is to ensure that producers are exposed to current practices and policies to maintain Alberta's leadership in agriculture and to acknowledge the realities of Alberta's seed producers while enabling them to continue processing.

Currently the Alberta Fusarium graminearum management plan, which was released by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development back in 2002 after extensive public consultation, requires cereal grain intended for seed to be tested and certified free of Fusarium graminearum. In addition, landowners and seed, grain, and feed processors are tasked with the responsibility of controlling, destroying, or preventing the introduction of Fusarium as outlined in the Agricultural Pests Act and other regulations.

One group that brings all appropriate stakeholders to the table is the Fusarium Action Committee, or the FAC. The FAC provides a forum to represent the interests and views of Alberta's agricultural industry regarding the management of Fusarium graminearum. The FAC also recommends management strategies for Fusarium to be included in the Alberta Fusarium graminearum management plan and educates Alberta's crop and livestock industries about Fusarium and the threat it represents to producers, processors, and other stakeholders. The committee reviews and evaluates the Alberta Fusarium graminearum management plan in consultation with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development as required.

Fusarium Action Committee members include the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, the provincial Agricultural Service Board committee, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, the Alberta Seed Growers Association, the Association of Alberta Co-op Seed Cleaning Plants, the Alberta Grains Council, the Alberta Corn Committee, the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, the Canadian seed association, the Alberta Beef Producers, and the Alberta Barley Commission.

Several FAC members have expressed concern over zero-tolerance legislation. One member, the Alberta Wheat Commission, has expressed frustration regarding Alberta's current zero-tolerance legislation on Fusarium. Directors of the Alberta Wheat Commission have passed a motion in support of establishing a zero-tolerance level for Fusarium that is greater than zero.

In November 2012 another FAC member, the Canadian Seed Trade Association, sent a letter to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development asking that a science-based review of Alberta's Fusarium management plan and the objectives of providing high-quality, competitively priced seed for Alberta farmers and facilitating trade be launched. The Canadian Seed Trade Association highlighted the fact that Alberta farmers were at a considerable disadvantage in relation to farmers in neighbouring provinces due to Alberta's Fusarium regulations as well as farmers being unable to access seed unless it's tested and found to have a nondetectable level of Fusarium. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development responded to this call in December 2012 by saying that he and his department were committed to minimizing the spread of Fusarium within Alberta, and he directed the FAC to lead a science-based review of the Fusarium management plan.

Another Fusarium Action Committee member, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, has discussed resolutions relating to Fusarium at their annual general meetings. During the 2012 AAMDC AGM resolution 6-13S, which declared Fusarium graminearum a pest under the Agricultural Pests Act and urged continued support for zero per cent tolerance, was defeated. In addition, resolution 5-13F, which also declared Fusarium a pest under the Agricultural Pests Act, urged the government of Alberta to amend the section of the act to include the following categories of pests: prohibited pests, pests, and nuisances. It was also defeated. The defeat of both of these resolutions illustrates that the debate surrounding acceptable levels of Fusarium continues.

In 2010 the then chair of the FAC, Dr. Jim Broach, who is also a pest management specialist with Alberta agriculture, said that the Agricultural Pests Act gives an area the option to apply to the minister for an exemption from nondetectable Fusarium. However, he said that the committee does not have the power to simply issue an exemption and that an area has to request an exemption.

At the last FAC, in 2012, there was no consensus on accepting a detectable level of Fusarium to which the entire province could adapt. This is due to the fact that southern Alberta had an increased incidence of the disease over the last few years while some parts of Alberta only reported trace levels. At the time parts of northern Alberta wanted to keep the nondetectable level on seed to prevent Fusarium from entering their area. As such, Agriculture and Rural Development retain the nondetectable of Fusarium on seed intended for propagation as referred to in section 22 of the Alberta pests act.

Last year the chair of the province's Fusarium Action Committee stated that the Fusarium management plan was being reviewed by plant pathologists. In addition, he noted that it was hard to guarantee that certified seed moving from Alberta and Saskatchewan was Fusarium free.

4:20

Madam Speaker, it's very evident that the debate regarding zero-tolerance Fusarium levels continues. On the one hand, it adversely impacts our farmers by giving our neighbours in other provinces who do not have zero-tolerance Fusarium levels a competitive advantage. It also hurts the agricultural community's important role in building Alberta and diversifying our economic base. On the other hand, I also recognize northern Alberta's con-

cerns about wanting to keep the nondetectable level on seed to prevent Fusarium from entering their area. The conversation on Fusarium must continue until an agreement satisfying all parties can be reached.

Once again, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for bringing forward Bill 201. Her passion for agricultural issues and concern regarding the future competitiveness and financial well-being of farmers is evidenced in this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 201 today. I'm going to speak a little bit differently about it rather than the growing of crops. I'm mainly a cattle producer, and there is some concern about feeding grain that has this Fusarium in it. Basically, our cows graze standing corn, and it's my understanding that a lot of the Fusarium is brought in by corn, so that's kind of where the problem started. I just started in the last couple of years, so it's not my fault that it came in. It's just been recently.

I would also like to see, you know, some inoculation for Fusarium within the corn so that we can stop that coming in because when cattle do eat it, it is a risk to cattle if they get a high enough concentration. Also, the birds: pheasants are a big concern in our area. We see a drastic decline in the number of pheasants. So when they're out feeding on the crops, we want to protect them also.

With the issue with the grains, the wheat and the barley, I think it's really important that we get a handle on this. You know, we can say that we want to keep the percentage at zero, but it's not going to happen. We're not there. We've got it, so now we have to deal with it, and I think this bill really goes to show a way that we are going to be handling this situation. It's very important. In my constituency there are hundreds of thousands of acres of crops being grown, and that's a lot of livelihoods. There's a lot of seed production in my area and families that sell seed with these companies and grow the seed, so it's a huge issue. I think, as some of the other members have stated, the Member for Little Bow, it's like getting the flu shot. It has to have a little bit in it to stop the spread, and I think this is a good example of how we can stop the spread. It is very important to all of Alberta.

It, you know, being an airborne issue, we can't stop the wind from blowing. I know there are many times in my area that we would like to stop the wind from blowing, but it doesn't seem to happen, so it's going to continue to become an issue. This is a good way to stop this issue or prevent it and do what we can. We can't just sit back and say that it's going to solve itself. It's not. We have to take some steps to ensure that we can protect our crops and our livelihoods, basically.

We see some issues in the cattle industry. You know, with the amount of grain being produced in Alberta, there are lots of cattle on feed. There are other diseases out there that we didn't have before, and all of a sudden we see them springing up in the area, so we have to be active and we have to find different vaccines. It's a continual progression in the vaccines that we use so that we can keep our herds safe, and this goes along with the safety of our herds, the safety of chickens. We have some chicken producers in our area and dairies and hog producers, and the different animals have a higher or lower tolerance for it.

It's definitely a very good process that the member is taking in getting this started. I think we can see by the number of people

who have spoken – we haven't heard anybody speak against it yet. If there is anybody against it, I'd like to hear their arguments of why they're against it. So far everybody is speaking for it. That's a good thing. You know, it's just finding the challenges and dealing with the challenges rather than trying to ignore them. We have to step up and do our part to protect Albertans and our livestock.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister – Family and Community Safety.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014, brought forward by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. The colleague across the aisle is a friend of mine. I had an opportunity to ride a combine for the first time this past summer and experience some of the agricultural issues and talk to some folks in her constituency. I'm always happy as an urban MLA to help support rural issues because they're really not rural issues; they're Alberta issues. They affect all of us if we want to have food on our plates.

Agriculture is Alberta's largest renewable industry. That is an important thing to note. It accounts for \$12 billion in farm cash receipts. That was in 2012 alone. I had a chance to spend some time with our agriculture minister out in the Medicine Hat area, an area that is very close to my heart. That was where I had my first television job and, certainly, where I had a chance to speak to a lot of constituents in that area about issues that they're dealing with out there. I know that the Bow Island area grows almost 100 per cent of the catnip in North America. Certainly, those areas are extremely important. Considering that Canada is quickly becoming one of the countries that produces more food than it consumes, more in-depth conversations on the state of agriculture in this province I think are essential.

Prior to my colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock bringing up the issue of Fusarium and bringing it to my attention, I must admit I was pretty naive about the intricacies of crop production and the issues that farmers face. Certainly, it's been an education for me. I was aware of the farmers' worries about precipitation levels, temperature fluctuations, and some of the other visibly tangible issues like hail damage, but knowledge of farmers also having to take into account risks that are not so visible to the naked eye, like Fusarium, was unknown to me. So that's why I applaud my colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for bringing this issue out for a very public and important discussion. It's essential for all Albertans, as I've said, rural and urban. To be aware of the complex issues that farmers face I think is important in order for them to be successful. It's important for all of us.

The purpose of the hon. member's bill is to reclassify Fusarium graminearum as a nuisance by amending the Agricultural Pests Act to accept a Fusarium tolerance of .5 per cent. Now, I'm a bit torn on how to side with the proposed changes in this bill. My fellow members of the Legislature have already brought valid points on both sides of the argument, and it leads me to think about what we can accomplish if we focus our efforts on new developments in seed technology. I know these things are happening in Alberta right now. I've had a chance to speak to some of the people who do this fine work, and I'm so glad that we have the level and depth of knowledge that we have on these technologies.

4:30

I've learned that Fusarium is not specific to wheat and barley, but it's also been rampant in basil and other herbs. I know that in the Bow Island area we certainly have some wonderful companies growing herbs out in that area. While Alberta's economy doesn't hinge on the success of the basil market, it's important to note that a leading researcher at the University of Massachusetts has been able to develop a Fusarium-resistant sweet basil. It's currently being monitored and retested in case the Fusarium fungus mutates and overcomes the resistant mechanism in the strain. However, no signs of this have surfaced.

Madam Speaker, I refer to this case because I know Alberta is a place where innovation and seed technology is essential to the continued growth and viability of the agriculture sector. I've driven throughout the province, and I've noticed the signs on land that is testing new strains of seed. When I see those signs, I often ask myself about how far we have come in agriculture because of the unwavering dedication of Albertans to innovation. I want to take the time to quote our hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, who said that innovation and diversification in all of our sectors are the key to Alberta's long-term success. Nowhere is that more true than agriculture, already Alberta's second-largest industry.

Madam Speaker, that brings me back to the issue at hand about changing the acceptable levels of Fusarium in seed from zero tolerance to .5 per cent. I ask the question: is changing the levels the answer, or should we focus our efforts on solving the problem instead of finding a way to tolerate the problem? I understand the economic downfalls that face farmers when their seed is rejected because of detected Fusarium. However, where do we stop going down what could be a very slippery slope? So much like the breakthrough for the basil growers, we should be striving to develop a Fusarium-resistant strain of wheat to battle the spread of the fungus. With organizations like Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Alberta really does have the tools to target our pioneering background and work towards this growing fungal problem.

People often refer to the Alberta advantage based on our low tax rates in comparison to other jurisdictions, but I really think that the Alberta advantage is really about our human capital. Just last week Bill 1, the Savings Management Act, was tabled in the Legislature, and one of the highlights was the agriculture and food innovation endowment. The endowment fund highlights innovation and diversification as essential to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of our agriculture industry. It's a \$200 million endowment, and it provides enhanced funding for basic and applied agriculture research in Alberta, but it also supports value-added product development and commercialization activity.

Madam Speaker, is our solution to the Fusarium issue in maybe pairing our human capital with this endowment to produce a made-in-Alberta solution? Is our best course of action against an issue where members of this House have heard arguments extremely for and against – personally, I lean toward developing new seed technologies to aid in mitigating the spread of Fusarium. However, we know that new technologies don't happen quickly. In the meantime our farmers in southern Alberta are facing profit losses as Fusarium becomes more prevalent in the spread from our neighbours to the east. The importance of keeping our farmers competitive isn't just limited to their financial livelihood but the livelihood of Alberta's agriculture and the livelihood of people whose tables are filled by Alberta farmers. The success of farmers in the north is not mutually exclusive to the farmers in the south affected by Fusarium. We rise and fall as a province, and a

solution has to be found to address concerns on both sides of the argument.

Madam Speaker, I realize I'm not a leading expert on seed development, nor are any of my colleagues in this House. That's not our job as MLAs. Our job is to ensure that experts are provided with an environment that is conducive to economic success, to innovation, and to development in all the sectors. I think with respect to my aforementioned examples of organizations like Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions and our recently announced endowment fund that the House will continue to provide the environment to develop solutions to issues like Fusarium. Like with the oil sands technology and the vigour in northern Alberta, I'm confident that Alberta experts will develop a made-in-Alberta solution that will not only address the Fusarium issues at home but can be marketed around the world.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to all of the arguments my colleagues bring forward and hope we can address the best way to mitigate the Fusarium issue. Once again I thank the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for bringing this issue to the Legislature.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014, introduced by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. I would like to thank the hon. member for her effort on this bill. As the minister of agriculture has often said, any time we discuss agricultural issues and raise the profile of agriculture, it is a good day, and I would agree with him.

Madam Speaker, the purpose of Bill 201 is to review and amend the Agricultural Pests Act. Currently the act prohibits any propagation and distribution of seed, root, bulb, tuber, or any other vegetable containing a pest. Fusarium graminearum and several other Fusarium species are plant pathogens that cause a serious fungal disease called Fusarium head blight, FHB. This disease affects wheat, barley, oats, and corn and, of course, lowers the quality, as we've heard over and over again today. Landowners and seed, grain, and feed processors have responsibility to control, destroy, or prevent the establishment of Fusarium as outlined in the act and respective regulation.

Madam Speaker, Fusarium is not new to Alberta producers. It's been present in Alberta since 1989. Initially it was found only at low levels. However, over the years there have been increased incidences in severity in parts of central and southern regions of the province, and in the last few years we have seen even more occurrences in the south.

As outlined in the Agricultural Pests Act, municipal authorities have the responsibility to enforce pest control and enhance management measures within their jurisdictions. Because of this we cannot ignore the input from our municipalities. I'd like to take this opportunity to address the positions of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. Madam Speaker, I understand that there is divided opinion among municipalities and counties regarding the zero-tolerance classification. Many farmers whose crop fields are free from this infection support the current zero-tolerance practice. This would allow them to better control the quality of the seed they buy and protect their land from Fusarium contamination. However, other producers, whose fields are infected with Fusarium, feel the pest act does not properly protect their interest. This puts Alberta seed growers at a disad-

vantage because zero-tolerance for Fusarium would impede their productions.

As a result of this concern Fusarium has been a topic of resolutions at the past two Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties conventions. During the 2013 AGM resolution 6-13S, Fusarium graminearum, recommended that the association support the Alberta government's support for zero per cent tolerance for Fusarium graminearum. It states that crop producers and the agricultural industry in Alberta have experienced economic losses as a result of lowered-quality crops due to Fusarium. In addition, at certain concentrations Fusarium also presents a health risk to livestock. Therefore, the resolution urges the government to support mandatory testing for Fusarium graminearum prior to grains entering any seed cleaning plant or mobile cleaning unit, to prevent spreading the disease. This resolution was defeated. On the other hand, resolution 5-13F, Agricultural Pests Act – Fusarium graminearum, which supports the reclassification of Fusarium as a nuisance, was also defeated.

4:40

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development recognizes the impacts of Fusarium. After an extensive consultation in 2002 it released the first comprehensive Alberta Fusarium graminearum management plan. That's a mouthful. The management plan outlines the objectives of the government and other stakeholders to control and manage Fusarium. It states that "municipalities have the authority to enhance the standard for any named pest within their own jurisdiction," and the ultimate responsibility lies with "the owner or the occupant of the land." However, the reality is that in places where Fusarium has been found, the management plan is often ignored. Some municipalities and agricultural producers feel that a zero tolerance level of Fusarium is unattainable. In addition, it raises into question of the effectiveness of the management plan set out in 2002.

I have had the opportunity to meet with members of the Agricultural Service Board from across the province. I've met with members in my own community, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, in the agricultural community, and the members from my community are divided on this issue. We've heard that a couple of times here today, with members presenting different opinions. I know that many of my colleagues from northern Alberta are concerned about the change in the level.

But once again I would really like to thank the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for her hard work on this bill, because it raises an important issue that affects Alberta's agricultural sector. As I've mentioned earlier, municipalities and counties have expressed differing opinions on the proposed amendment due to each region's unique condition, and as I mentioned, the members of my community of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville are also divided.

As agriculture is our largest renewable resource, I would like to make an amendment, Madam Speaker. I would like to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014, be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the following:

Bill 201, the Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has moved an amendment to Bill 201. We'll pause for a moment while we distribute the amendment to each person.

Hon. members, this is a debatable motion, and any member who wishes to speak on this motion has up to 10 minutes to do so.

Mr. Donovan: I'd be more than happy to let my colleague from Edmonton-Centre get up to go on this.

I thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for this amendment, taking it to Resource Stewardship. Just a couple of clarification things on it, I guess, as my understanding is that this will be the first thing that goes up, and then it'll be dealt with right away. It kind of intrigues me a little bit, because I know there are some agricultural producers on that side of the floor that either have rented their farms out or are current farmers from northern Alberta, which kind of seems to be a bit of the split, and I haven't heard a whole lot from them. So maybe in Resource Stewardship they'll let their feelings be known, their thoughts of what some of their constituents think of it up there.

Now, it is interesting that this has been brought before the Fusarium Action Committee in Alberta to begin with, so it is nice to see that this might actually get dealt with right away. I assume that it's a very friendly amendment from one member to another on this, to be able to offer it. I'm getting the nod that, yeah, it looks to be a friendly amendment on that.

Now, I guess the question is on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, the background of the people on that committee. I don't have the actual list in front of me of the people who are on that committee, to see what their background is on it. When you send something to committee, you want to make sure that the people on that committee have a good background in it because you don't generally send it to a committee just for input if they don't have any good history on it. It'd be interesting also to see where the minister is on this, if this is a direction that he sees it going, because then you'd wonder if it shouldn't maybe be a government bill rather than playing along with this.

The notice of amendment, I think, has some positives to it as long as there are people on the Resource Stewardship Committee that have a good background in it. I'm just not sure off the top of my head who's on that committee. I'm just trying to think. If I can buzz quickly – my colleague from Edmonton-Centre always has this kind of information. Oh, look at her. Thank you very much. As I look at this, there's definitely some – I mean, all colleagues in here are always good people on committees, or they wouldn't be on them. Just to make sure they have the background on it, I'm going through that.

Ms Blakeman: Hey, I'm on it.

Mr. Donovan: Right there alone, that makes it worth while.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. But I'm not a renowned expert in Fusarium.

Mr. Donovan: Never question somebody's quality on it.

But it is interesting to see that some of the people who have spoken in favour of it are on this committee. Also, it's good to see that there's a cross-section here. The Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley is also on here, which is good because I know his vast history in agriculture, and as a past producer he would definitely have something to add to it. One of the things there is to make sure that the committee is balanced out on what they're going to do with it.

One of the clarification points for the motion, though, is: what's the actual timeline for it to go to committee and come back? When my constituents ask me . . .

Mr. Campbell: Six months.

Mr. Donovan: Six months? That's pretty fast for government. That's not bad.

It's a process that we can go through. At least it's on the Order Paper, and something can be dealt with then. I was surprised that they hadn't come up with this revelation before they tabled the bill so that maybe the government motion could be on it. As long as the member that's presenting the bill is happy with that, I think there are some positives. At least it's moving forward.

So in six months, once that motion is done, it will come back this fall – I guess I'm making sure of the process – then it comes back to a committee, and then they'll have the report. Then, just to clarify, if the committee recommends it to go forward or they decide to six-pack it, what's the process from there if they allow it to go forward? I guess I'd just like clarification before I say that it's a good idea to go through that, to make sure that if, for instance, it goes to committee, the committee recommends back to us that we proceed with it: does that get done, then, this fall, or is it done when the committee presents their process?

Ms Blakeman: The following session.

Mr. Donovan: Okay. The following session, afterwards.

That's, I guess, some progress. If they decide to give it the old heave-ho, the committee does the same thing. They report back here, and then they report the recommendations from the committee back to this House. Is there a time, being new at the process of how this works, that we'd be able to raise the conversation again and go against what the committee has on it or that every MLA could vote on it in a standing vote, or it is purely a committee thing? It kind of lays all the cards on the table that way so that everybody would know what everybody was thinking and whether they're supporting it or not.

Ms Blakeman: They can come report back to the Assembly to keep going.

Mr. Donovan: To keep going.

So, for instance, if the committee brought it back – this is, I mean, a process question, and I'm glad we have such an abundance of knowledgeable people in here on how the process works. Sorry, Madam Speaker. If the committee comes back and says, "No, we don't recommend it," what's the process from there? What would be done with it? There's another motion, then, that you could go to from that. Even though the committee says, "We don't believe in it," we could actually make a motion to bring it forward and go from there. That's interesting. That's something I'd like to do.

4:50

Again, I don't want to see this get lost in the process, where maybe a couple of people don't think it's a good idea and it gets lost. I know this member has put a ton of work into this and, in all honesty, definitely has caused quite a debate amongst everybody in doing it. It has been a bit of a conversation piece in different parts of Alberta, and it's not that all southern Alberta people think it's great, as the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat had brought up. You know, there are definitely some producers in his area that are questioning the validity of the bill. It is good to see.

I think this is definitely something that we don't need to bury our head in the sand on; we need to actually deal with it. So I would support the amendment from the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to take it to the committee on resource stewardship according to Standing Order 74.2 and hope that that

actually gives us a full conversation on it and that we'll be able to come to the committee and give our recommendations and points also.

Those are my thoughts on it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a couple of quick points. First of all, I just want to make sure that the member understands that the minister for agriculture is in support of this going to committee, to answer his question.

I think the other thing that's important, Madam Speaker, is that the reason we go to committee is that we have a chance for experts and stakeholders to come and make their presentations. The makeup of the committee is not as important as the fact that people can come and make presentations to the committee, and then we have our well-rounded debate as to what the pros and cons are for this bill going forward. I'm not as concerned about who's on the committee as I am about who's going to come in front of the committee, and this gives us the ability to have these people come forward and actually educate Members of the Legislative Assembly on some of the pros and cons dealing with this important bill.

I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure whether to support this or not. What used to happen in this House with motions and bills from private members who are on the government side was that they got hoisted, so they sort of disappeared into the netherworld, never to be seen again. Now we send them to committee, which I would like and hope to see as a positive move, but, I think, often it's fairly akin to simply hoisting the bill because it disappears forever and doesn't come back to the Assembly with any vigour, or it comes back with a recommendation not to proceed. I do recognize the amount of work that not only the sponsoring member but all of the members I've heard talking about this have put into this issue, and I really wish that we could get a better process so that we could get a decision.

We've just spent some time debating it. A lot of people have spent time talking about it. Now it's going to go to a committee which, you know, hopefully, is able to call on some experts, as the Government House Leader suggested, but at the end of that we get a real decision, one that the government can move forward on or not. But this sort of constant moving it around to different places: you just end up with no predictability on an issue and, frankly, very little ability for my colleagues to go back to their constituents and say, "The decision was this" and carry forward from there. We seem to spend a lot of time just kind of shuffling the issue itself around through a series of other parliamentary processes. I really hope that when this goes to the committee, it's able to do a thorough job on it, and it comes back with a very clear decision.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 201 carried]

Mr. Campbell: Madam Speaker, we can call it 5 o'clock, if you like, and move on to Motion 501.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has moved that we call it 5:00 and move on to Motion 501.

[Motion carried]

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Combined Low Expenditure Assessments

501. Ms Blakeman moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to distribute revenue from combined low expenditure assessments on a province-wide, per capita basis to municipalities, towns, districts, and counties.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am going to try to have less paper on my desk and try and do this off the computer. I hope it works.

Thank you very much, everyone, for being here to consider Motion 501, which I am moving on to the floor for debate. I can add Métis settlements in there. But what I mean is that what we know as the linear property tax or the industrial property tax, as collected currently, be redistributed on a per capita basis throughout the province.

When I approach issues, I often say: "Well, okay. Is there a problem? Does it need government participation to resolve it? Do they need to intervene, or do they need to create or take something away? Does this particular government process address the problem?" I would argue that, in fact, all three of those criteria are being fulfilled here. Yes, we have a problem. Municipalities are underfunded. What's a municipality? It's a higher density community of people that are sharing a smaller geographic area and a larger population. We would usually define it as a village or a town or a city. But it does not include a rural, sparsely populated area.

We have municipalities that are, given the tax tools that they have right now, unable to deal with growth – the bottom line is that everybody's yelling at them – and they're unable to provide the modern services that they want to. So if they want to try and be a greener municipality and provide public transit, for example, they're pressed to find enough money to do that. Certainly, the city of Edmonton was having to look, in the last budget, toward the government to get additional money to be able to fund the LRT, which is something that's very important to the citizens of Edmonton. We actually have a situation now where municipalities are told how much debt they can run. How indicative is that of a problem, that no one is told, "You can't run a deficit or a debt"? In fact, what the province says is: you can run a debt up to this amount. I think that's a very bad sign for how municipalities are being funded.

I want to stop here and extend my thanks to Don Good and North Darling and a number of mayors and councillors who have advised and educated me on this particular issue and over a number of years as well. I appreciate their sticking this out with me.

Much of this tax that I'm talking about, which is known under several names – combined low expenditure assessment or a linear property tax or an industrial property tax – is really rooted in history. Let me be clear here. I'm not talking about how the property is assessed. I'm not talking about what the mill rate is. I'm talking about redistributing the tax once it's collected. How it's assessed, how the mill rates are established, what the certain percentage is: that's a whole other conversation I am not having today. I'm talking about redistributing the final amount that is available from the collection of this particular tax.

I specifically am interested in redistributing this tax on a per capita basis so that every area would have access to the tax money and not, as is currently happening, quite a small number of people.

5:00

When I look at history – and let's look at work and productivity – in 1920 the GDP from agriculture was 75 per cent. The province changed a lot. By 2010 the GDP from agriculture was 1.8. So it went from 75 per cent to 1.8 per cent of the province. The population, which is the other part of this equation here, in 1900 was 75 per cent rural. That makes perfect sense. But in 2011 the population was 83 per cent urban. Just to note, Alberta is the third-highest urban population province in Canada, behind Ontario and B.C. We have a lot of people that live in urban areas.

What we've had is the population migrating from rural to urban, and we've had the money earned, or the productivity, move from agriculture to, in order, energy, finance and real estate, construction, business and commercial services, retail and wholesale, transportation and utilities, manufacturing, and so on down. At this point agriculture is the very last on the list.

Now, I want to be clear here that I am not dissing agriculture. I am not against family farms. I am not saying that agriculture isn't valued. I think it is valued. If anything, it's increasingly valued as we start to understand food safety, where our food is coming from, being able to know where it was grown. Is it organic food? Is it within the hundred miles diet? Is it within an area that we can get the food from if something was to happen? That has become increasingly important in everybody's book. This is not to say that agriculture and the production of agriculture is not valued. It is, and I want to be really clear about that.

What I'm talking about is a tax that is being collected based on a historic situation that no longer exists and happenstance. The access to this property tax or linear tax or CLEA has decreased as the populations have increased. In 1996 the urban areas accessed \$97.7 million. In 2010 we actually accessed less of this money: \$81.5 million. More people; less money. The rural areas in 1996 accessed \$463.6 million. In 2010 that had gone up to \$1,356,000,000. That's a lot, a lot of money.

Taxes are used by all levels of government to pay for the programs and services for their citizens. The province and the feds have access to income tax; the more people that are working or the more they're earning, the more money the province and the feds make without lifting a finger. The municipalities have very limited tax tools. Their biggest one is property tax, and property tax does not deal with growth.

Here we have a tax that is collected on entities that have little or no cost to the governing bodies. These linear taxes, for example, are collected on telecommunications systems, on transmission lines, on pipelines, on railways, on cogeneration, and on a machinery and equipment tax. That doesn't cost the local area very much. I mean, they don't maintain the railroads, for example, or the oil and gas wells or the pipelines. They maybe have to put in a road occasionally, but once the road is built, it's built. That's why these are called low-expenditure assessments. Once they're in there, it requires very little money to keep them up. To quote Dr. McMillan, an economics professor: linear property taxes are associated with no or, at best, relatively little additional expenditure; their effect is much like that of an unconditional grant to a community. So we have many people who cannot access much of this tax, and each year they access less of it.

Now, I spoke earlier about Albertans' very strong ethic about fairness, and I would say: is it fair that villages, towns, and cities get \$28 per person of linear taxes collected in this province but

rural, sparsely populated areas get \$1,930, almost \$2,000, per person? No, it's not fair.

It's not fair that the MD of Bonnyville and the county of St. Paul, which have inside those areas the towns of Bonnyville, St. Paul, and Elk Point and the summer villages of Glendon, Horseshoe Bay, Bonnyville Beach, and Pelican Narrows – well, the MD and the county have 50 per cent of the regional population, but they access 78 per cent of the regional property tax.

So I ask for your support in urging the government to redistribute this particular tax. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on Motion 501, brought forth by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. Motion 501 reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to distribute revenue from combined low expenditure assessments on a province-wide, per capita basis to municipalities, towns, districts, and counties.

At first glance this seems like a somewhat harmless motion, but if you examine it closely, there are many potential issues here. Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a couple of minutes just to outline some of those issues.

First of all, a little background would help. The term "low-expenditure assessment" was coined by a former Peace River councillor, but it is not a term that is used by the government of Alberta nor anyone else. Low-expenditure assessments refer to linear properties – machinery and equipment, electrical cogeneration facilities, and railway properties – most of which are located in rural municipalities such as a municipal district or county.

The problem with this, Madam Speaker, is that this statement that low-expenditure assessments come with no cost to municipalities is simply not true. These counties have roads to maintain; these linear assessments all have infrastructure surrounding them. Simply because you're not out there on a daily basis maintaining something doesn't mean that it doesn't come with a cost. Maintaining the road is not a matter of building the road and then it's done. With the amount of equipment moving on these roads to maintain those linear assessments and also to keep industry moving in rural Alberta, those roads as well as the bridges and the other infrastructure are under constant repair and rebuilding.

The councillor argued that these properties generate significant property tax revenues from the municipalities in which they are located while requiring minimal or no expenditures for municipal services. Well, part of that statement is true. They can provide significant tax revenue for those municipalities, but those municipalities all pass budgets that include those assessments, as every other municipality does. That means that those revenues are poured back into that municipality, and they're used to maintain the infrastructure required.

The rural municipalities that have access to a lot of the linear assessments use those revenues to create economic opportunity in rural Alberta. I don't think we can understate the importance of that. With \$77 billion a year being generated by rural Alberta, rural Alberta is truly the engine here driving the rest of this province. We have to understand that this money from linear assessments helps to drive that engine. It helps to keep it going. To suggest that we would somehow ask rural municipalities to tax their industry, tax their linear assessment property owners and that you would then take that money away from those counties and redistribute it – let's face it. Anytime we redistribute anything in

this province on a per capita basis, it's great for Edmonton and Calgary and a couple of other larger centres, but the rest of Alberta gets nothing out of that. That's exactly what would happen here.

5:10

Rural Alberta needs the support of linear assessments in order to revitalize their towns, their communities, and their villages. They work together, with each other, and that's where the solution to this lies. It doesn't lie in taking something away from one and redistributing it on some kind of a social program to the rest of Alberta. What it does come from is that working together with each municipality, allowing them to work on solutions on their regional basis, on their own terms is by far the best way to go with this, Madam Speaker.

To legislate this, to suggest that we would be forcing mostly counties to be giving up their linear assessments in order to benefit all of Alberta, is certainly not fair to anyone in those counties. Taking the wealth from rural Alberta and distributing it in larger urban centres: well, that may be fair in the eyes of urban centres, but it's certainly not fair in the eyes of rural Alberta.

I would encourage all members to vote against this motion not because it's not an issue, not because it's not something that we do need to address. We do need to talk about this, and we do need to be constantly encouraging municipalities to get together, to form the partnerships, the alliances that make for a healthy rural Alberta. But this is truly the wrong method to do that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address Motion 501, and I thank both the Member for Edmonton-Centre for bringing it forward and my colleague from Banff-Cochrane for adding to the debate.

Here's what we know, Madam Speaker. We know that all municipalities in Alberta are feeling the pain of chronic under-funding. We know that the current patchwork of grants is not sufficient for them. We know that this Premier and this government promised that MSI funding would go up across the board and that that promise was subsequently broken upon last year's budget. We know that there was a small bump in last week's budget, but it was certainly not enough to make up for the funding inequities that exist in our province.

Now, as a result of some of these things that we know, my colleagues and I in the last election and recently reannounced our 10-10 community infrastructure transfer. What that provides is stable, long-term block funding for municipalities, Madam Speaker. It takes the five main grants that this government currently has, whether that be MSI, waste water, GreenTRIP, strategic transportation grants, combines them all into one, and then divvies that up in a formula that would be somewhat similar to the MSI formula that is currently in place.

We don't necessarily know that the MSI formula is perfect. We're currently in the process of asking all municipalities across this province to give us their feedback on that formula. What we do know is that the MSI formula is far more fair and equitable than just a simple per capita distribution. I would suggest that this motion is doomed to fail on a number of levels. Distribution on a per capita basis would be completely inequitable to rural Alberta, and it's certainly not a formula that we would ever support in terms of municipal funding. We know that right now they take in, for example, the number of kilometres of roads that various

municipalities in rural communities have to maintain. It's one of many things, but redistributing this wealth on just a per capita basis is not acceptable.

What this motion is really proposing is a massive redistribution of wealth. I can understand why many individuals in urban centres would look at this and salivate at the thought of more money because there are funding shortfalls across this province for our municipalities. But I would remind members in this Assembly that those who do not learn their history are doomed to repeat it, and I bring up an example of a parallel I would like to share about what history can teach us around a system like this.

In 1980, Madam Speaker, due to a disagreement on revenue sharing between Alberta and the federal government, the federal government unilaterally imposed something, that has been very well known here in Alberta, called the national energy program. Now, the Liberal mindset of the federal government in Ontario and based in Quebec was that Alberta had a small population that could not influence the outcome of an election with the few seats that they had to offer. So why should this rural province have all this additional wealth that it was able to generate based on the oil and gas sector? At the time revenues were going up dramatically.

So what the federal government decided to do was take this massive amount of wealth unilaterally and to redistribute it. One of the problems with that – obviously, there are a number of them – is that there hasn't been a Liberal MP elected in this province since that ill-advised plan. It created severe distrust of the federal government here in Alberta, and it begs the question: why would we ever consider doing the exact same thing right here within our province?

Now, I have grown to respect the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that, you know, a member of the Liberal Party of Alberta would put forward a motion that would emulate the theory of Pierre Trudeau around redistribution of wealth. It is, without question, one of the most infamous attacks on our province. If you ask any Albertan about their thoughts on the national energy program, they would label it one of the most divisive, detested, disrespectful, and contemptuous policies in the history of our country. I just don't believe that recreating a system like that by taking this wealth from our rural communities is the answer.

Is there a problem? Perhaps there is a problem. We've identified that. We've agreed on that. The Member for Edmonton-Centre outlined that there is a problem in that municipalities are under-funded – we certainly agree with that – but we do not accept nor do we support the idea that taking the combined low expense assessment, or the linear assessment, away from our rural counties and redistributing on a per capita basis is the answer to that problem.

Accepting or supporting this motion I believe would be a mistake. I cannot support it, our party cannot support it, and I would encourage all of my colleagues to vote against this motion.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Motion 501, being brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. As we have heard today, Motion 501 urges the government to distribute revenue from combined low expenditure assessments, or CLEA, on a province-wide, per capita basis to municipalities, towns, districts, and counties.

Madam Speaker, I feel that the conversation we are having today is very timely since last week our government introduced

our back-in-black budget. Our plan to keep building a stronger and economically attractive Alberta was conveyed by the minister of Treasury Board and Finance. The government's budget for 2014 contains essential funding for both urban and rural municipalities. For instance, municipalities will receive more than \$2 billion in direct funding from government in the '14-15 budget.

There will be an increase of \$150 million over the next three years for the municipal sustainability initiative in capital. Our government will also be able to rehabilitate 2,500 kilometres of existing provincial highways, assets that help, yes, to better facilitate the flow of goods between our province and our neighbours to the south.

Yes, Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for allowing us to highlight the many funding initiatives our government has in place to help all municipalities, be they urban or rural, to succeed and thrive.

With regard to Motion 501's focus on revenue from combined low expenditure assessment I believe it would be pertinent to discuss the variety of municipal assessment types. Assessment types can include residential, farmland, nonresidential, nonresidential linear, nonresidential railway, nonresidential cogenerating, and machinery and equipment.

Linear properties are considered properties that have distribution lines or other facilities and may cross municipal boundaries. Some examples include oil and gas wells, petroleum pipelines, electric power systems, telecommunication systems, and cable television systems. Underground tanks, fuel scrubbers, compressors, chemical injectors, and metering equipment, for instance, fall under machinery and equipment. Local assessors are in charge of assessing most machinery. The assessor, who is designated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is responsible for assessing machinery and equipment forming part of linear property.

5:20

Railway property value is assessed at a fixed dollar amount per kilometre based on the annual tonnage transported on the rail right-of-way. Rail companies must report yearly to the local assessor the type and length of line in each municipality, and the railway property is assessed by the local assessors.

High expenditure assessment types include residential, farmland, and nonresidential, and they are considered high expenditure assessment sources. Low expenditure assessment sources include nonresidential linear, nonresidential railway, nonresidential generating, and machinery and equipment. These four types of low expenditure assessments combined form the low expenditure assessment.

Madam Speaker, most low expenditure assessments are located in rural municipalities. Albertans living in rural areas depend on the property taxes generated from these facilities, and they are used to fund essential infrastructure in those areas. A per capita redistribution of these revenues would debilitate these areas as millions of dollars would be rerouted from rural to urban centres. This would create a definitive divide between rural and urban Albertans. Our government respects and recognizes the autonomy of local governments and has the utmost faith that municipalities are positioned to make the best decisions for their citizens.

Again, our government has in place funding that strengthens both urban and rural municipalities. We must foster a united Alberta by strengthening ties with all municipalities, not just a select few.

I thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre for allowing us to undertake this discussion, and I look forward to hearing the views of my colleagues during the rest of today's debate. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support Motion 501. The reason I rise to support Motion 501 is because it's about equality and fairness. As you know, combined low expenditure assessments such as power lines, rail lines, communications, nonresidential cogeneration, telephone lines, telecommunication lines, and oil and gas wells require very minimal expenditure from any municipality. Every Albertan in this province builds this province, whether you're in Edmonton or Calgary or Two Hills or Peace River or the municipal districts and counties. We all build this great province, and we are all in this together. We need to build our towns and our cities and our municipalities.

Now, the Alberta Liberal caucus was given evidence by Deputy Mayor North Darling from Peace River and Don Good, also from the Peace River area. The evidence was that of \$1.5 billion worth of taxes, only 6 per cent of them went to 83 per cent of the population. Alberta used to be a very rural province. In fact, this country used to be a very rural country. But this province and this country are very urban. There has been a tremendous growth in urban Canada and urban Alberta. Eighty-three per cent of Albertans live in urban Alberta.

Madam Speaker, in an equal and fair and just society how is it possible that 83 per cent of Albertans, when we all build this province together, only get 6 per cent of the taxation and that 17 per cent of Alberta gets 94 per cent of the taxation, which is approximately \$1.419 billion a year, on an annual basis?

The city of Edmonton is the hub for northern Alberta. We understand how important it is to work with northern Alberta. Their success is our success, and for those who live in Edmonton, Edmonton's success is northern Alberta's success. We're all in this together.

The city leaders are in dire need of sustainable, predictable funding to build roads and bridges and for Edmonton and Calgary the LRT. We need to move large numbers of people from all over the province and all over the country, who come to share in our prosperity, to work. We need to get them to work and get them back home. We needed our LRT a decade ago, and we need it today.

If this tax was fairly distributed on a per capita basis, that would mean \$260 million out of \$1.5 billion for the capital city of the greatest province in the country. That's it: \$260 million. That's not a lot out of \$1.5 billion. That would buy us about 2.6 to three kilometres of LRT track each and every year. Edmonton and Calgary having a good LRT system benefits all of us in this province. It takes cars off the roads, so roads won't need to be repaired so much. It reduces the amount of carbon pollution and emissions. You know what? When you have a good LRT system, people can actually get to work quicker, faster. We'll have fewer accidents on the roads. People can actually do a little bit of work when they're riding the train. Hey, they can even talk on their cellphone if they like.

Madam Speaker, this issue is the fact that this province has changed and this country has changed, and when there's change, policy must change. Maintaining an old policy that unfairly distributes \$1.5 billion – we have to change.

Many of my colleagues from the Wildrose, you know, are from rural Alberta. I really appreciate the work that everyone in rural Alberta does, whether it's agriculture, the oil and gas industry. I grew up in a rural town in a farming area in a different country. I grew up in a small town in Squamish, B.C., worked in the mill. I recognize the challenges of smaller areas. I also live in the capital

city in the best province and in the best country in the world. I recognize challenges in the city.

You know, I certainly hope the MLAs in the other political parties from Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, and Peace River would support this policy because this policy will go to help the areas that they represent. There are many areas in rural Alberta that don't get the share of linear taxation. It's not just urban versus rural. There are many rural communities that do not get their fair share when they all helped build this province together. This is the fundamental issue of: how do we build this province moving forward?

Madam Speaker, I guess the question is: is it fair, you know, for all the MDs and counties, that constitute 12.7 per cent of the population, to get 61.5 per cent of the funding? I can understand the economic policy of the Conservatives. It's all about trickle-down economics, right? Give a handful of people a billion dollars, and tell everybody else to eat cake. They think everything is going to trickle down to the average guy.

That's where the Alberta Liberals differ from these two Conservative parties in the House. We believe in equality of opportunity, that everyone should be given a fair chance. We believe that we're all in this together, okay? I certainly hope that the hon. members from both political parties will not be united in opposing this together. In fact, I think you should be united in supporting this together.

Most of the hon. members elected here from cities and towns from across the province: this would benefit the very citizens that you represent and help build the very cities and towns that you represent and get their leaders the essential funding that they need so they can build their infrastructure. Infrastructure is so essential, to have that sustainable, predictable funding, because infrastructure is an economic enabler. It helps to grow our economy all across the province.

5:30

Madam Speaker, to be the capital city of the greatest province in the world – you know, the roads have been in a state of disrepair. Municipal leaders have not been given the funding by this provincial government over the years. Mayors Iveson and Nenshi are not happy with the budget. They believe that they need the tools. Whether it's the tax tools, they need a fair share of revenue across this province so they can do their job. They understand that if they get a fair share of revenue on a regular basis – sustainable, predictable funding – our economy can go to the next level, and we can deal with the environmental issues. With a nice LRT system in Edmonton and Calgary our smaller cities can use this funding in other ways, maybe liquid natural gas buses. Our municipalities right now have about \$8 billion of debt and about \$24 billion of deferred infrastructure projects, plus or minus a couple of billion.

I ask every member here to say if it is fair, if it is right to have a disproportionate share of this go to 13 per cent of the people and the rest of Albertans . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour for me to rise today to speak to Motion 501, proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

This motion calls for the government to ensure that urban municipalities receive their share of revenue from the combined

low expenditure assessment, or CLEA. The motion will seek to do this, in turn, by ensuring that revenue is distributed on a province-wide, per capita basis.

Madam Speaker, there are multiple municipal assessment types, ranging from residential to farmland to various other nonresidential types. When considering a more complex topic such as the one which is the subject of this motion, it may be helpful to gain a broad perspective on how similar issues have been dealt with in other areas. Other jurisdictions in Canada, particularly Nova Scotia and British Columbia, have undertaken reviews of property taxation. Nova Scotia has a tax cap system for residential properties. This has been a point of contention within the business community as assessments for commercial properties have risen steeply in some areas while residential properties have not. This can place what is often seen as an undue burden on small local businesses. Several reports and studies on the CAP system have been issues within recent years. This includes the 2010-2011 review of the Nova Scotia capped assessment program.

Nova Scotia has also amended the Municipal Government Act to allow for phasing out of the business occupancy tax over several years. The 25 per cent category included hotels, motels, restaurants, campgrounds, service stations, and motor vehicle dealerships, which were eliminated in 2006. The 50 per cent category included all other businesses except for financial institutions, which were phased out over five years and eliminated in 2010. The 75 per cent category included financial institutions such as banks, trust companies, insurance companies, credit unions, and loan or investment companies, which were eliminated in 2013.

Currently a review of the property tax system is under way, which was commissioned by the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, the Association of Municipal Administrators, and the Property Valuation Services Corporation. The review is aimed at figuring out the best way in which to share the cost of providing local services.

Another noteworthy jurisdiction that has dealt with this issue is British Columbia. In 2010 a major industrial property steering committee was formed, and its work focused primarily on municipal property taxation of major industrial properties. The joint review was established by the province, the Union of BC Municipalities, and industry. A need was identified to make property taxes more conducive to investment while assuring local government services were provided fairly for all taxpayers. What the property tax reviews of British Columbia have in common is that they are co-operative in nature. This is in contrast to the idea of CLEA here in Alberta as the Nova Scotian and British Columbian reviews do not seek to pit municipalities against one another.

A potential shortcoming associated with the motion currently being considered by this House is the possibility that it could decrease the amount of revenue that specialized municipal districts and counties receive. Madam Speaker, we ought to be cognizant lest we stoke divisions between urban and rural municipalities needlessly. This motion carries with it the potential ramification that the financial health and economic viability of rural municipalities could be negatively impacted, which would do little to improve a co-operative spirit between urban and rural municipalities. The needs of urban and rural municipalities are not simply quantitatively but are also qualitatively distinct from one another.

Clearly, the distribution of funds on a per capita basis would favour urban municipalities, but this means of distribution may not be sensitive enough to address the different needs and circumstances of rural communities. While populations across the

province may vary, requirements for infrastructure may be radically different and indeed quite expensive. I will not go into that at great length, Madam Speaker, but I do want to emphasize that per capita distribution alone may not be the most holistic way of approaching the problem.

I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. While the matter is certainly worthy of consideration, I believe alternative avenues may hold better prospects for all Albertans.

With this, I conclude my remarks and anticipate the remainder of the debate. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to take this opportunity to speak to this motion today. As a former municipal councillor I have a great deal of heart into some of the words I'm going to express in a few moments.

Firstly, I'm opposed to this motion. I feel this is a very complex issue that has been raised. It's a good issue, but it requires a different solution than what has been proposed. As it stands, I think this motion fails to consider there are significant costs in other municipalities, especially rural. You can't just look at the revenues alone. You have to look at the whole picture.

Let's face it. Today we live in a growing society. There are huge demands on our systems and our municipalities and our lifestyles. There are certainly a lot of wonderful things that we do wish to have in our municipalities to support those lifestyles, and they cost a lot of money. Certainly, we have to figure out a way to fund these things that is fair – I certainly do agree with that – but we do not need to be hindering or robbing Peter to pay Paul. That just does not work, in my view. The MSI funding that we've had for the past few years has worked to a certain degree. Although there are some deficits and it may need some tweaking, there are certainly some other things we can do, including, by the way, our proposal in Wildrose with our 10-10 plan, that would provide an increase in funding, sustainable and predictable as well.

Nonetheless, we still have to look at how the other municipalities work. They do have in the rural areas a high amount of costs. Just let me express some of those costs to you. I don't know if the Member for Edmonton-Centre has considered that the infrastructure alone in rural municipalities is huge. They have 72 per cent of Alberta's roads. They have 59 per cent of the bridges, and some of these things can cost a half mil to a million dollars per kilometre to build and maintain. These are enormous, yet they have small populations. They have small amounts of commercial property. They have lesser amounts of a tax base compared to a huge city like Edmonton. How can you take away the funding that they depend on to maintain all these roads that all Albertans wish to use and not replace it with something for them? If you're going to take it away, you have to replace it with something else. Our 10-10 plan would provide that.

I would suggest to the House that regardless of the solution, this particular solution is not going to be the answer. There are a number of things that we can do together, I think, to improve the revenue stream, but taking the linear assessment and some of the other things that they're indicating that they want to combine with it in this plan is definitely not the way to go. Therefore, I cannot support this proposal, and I urge the rest of the House to consider that in their voting this afternoon.

Thank you.

5:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Many of the comments that I was going to make have already been said; however, I think some of them bear repeating. I will not be supporting the motion. As a municipal politician in a small urban municipality for 11 years I am well aware of the underfunding in all municipalities, not just Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer but the villages, towns. We're all suffering, some to a lesser extent than others, but still we're suffering.

As an AUMA board member for 11 of those years as well, along with my colleague from Banff-Cochrane, who has spoken very well on the issue – I think that he has mentioned much of what I would have said. He pointed out many of those issues. Cities like Edmonton and Calgary do have special needs; there's no question. My little village of Beiseker is not going to be putting in an LRT system any time soon, but we do have infrastructure problems. We have infrastructure deficits. There are programs that can help those situations. The GreenTRIP should be carried on. That can fund those types of special transportation issues.

In early spring of last year I did a tour as a Municipal Affairs critic in northern Alberta, and I talked to urban centres. I talked to rural MDs and counties. Yes, there are a lot of MDs and counties that have a real high linear tax assessment base, but there are others that don't. So it's not an equal amount everywhere we go. Like my colleague, I don't believe in robbing Peter to pay Paul. I don't think the issue is that Peter has too much. I think the issue that we should address is that Paul doesn't have enough. How do we fix that issue? I firmly believe that the Wildrose 10-10 plan will do that. We will bring that municipal funding up to where MSI should have been, as was promised us many years ago. We will bring that up and add to it.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre, when she made her opening comments regarding the CLEA, or the combined low expenditure assessment, made a statement that I think she may want to retract. She included industrial assessment in her opening statements. She might want to be careful what she wishes for because Edmonton, I'm sure, has a very high industrial tax assessment. Does she want to share that with the rest of us? I wouldn't think so.

Just to get back to our 10-10 plan here, we will sit with both associations, and we'll come up with a formula based on, I would suspect, much like how MSI is distributed now, with some tweaking, and we'll come to a consensus with both associations so that all municipalities in the province going forward receive substantial funding increases so that they can address all of their issues as well.

I'm sorry, but I cannot support this motion, and I would encourage others not to either. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise, to be here today to talk about this important issue. I can certainly tell you that in my riding of Cardston-Taber-Warner, which contains lots of small communities, every community that I go to has an idea about how to spend the money that the county or the MD has.

It reminds me of the story that's told about Vice-president Biden in the last presidential election in the U.S., when it came out that Mitt Romney, the other candidate, had donated \$3 million in charitable donations the previous year whereas Vice-president

Biden had contributed an awful lot less, somewhere in the order of \$300. When he was asked about this, he said that, well, yeah, sure; I've only donated \$300 of my own money, but I've donated \$50 million of yours.

I think that it's common practice to be willing to look at what somebody else has and to find a way to spend that for them. Certainly, the small municipalities and the larger ones in our province are underfunded, but I don't think this is the solution to that. There may be one or two counties that do have an excess of funds, but I can guarantee you that the majority of the counties do not. As has been mentioned, they have great expenses as well with a small population. One size simply does not fit all.

We know that the province has downloaded additional responsibilities onto counties and MDs as well as municipalities, and they haven't maintained the funding to the appropriate level. In my own little village of Stirling, for example, and in the villages and towns surrounding us, they were hit hard during this current budget year, the one that's just ending, and had to make significant cuts. People lost their jobs, people had to work extra hard, and of course if it wasn't for the spirit of volunteerism that's so common in small towns, likely we wouldn't have been able to accomplish as much as we were able to do.

One of the issues that we have with part of the current funding approach, with the grants, is that you have an awful lot of creative writing taking effect in these communities, with grant application writers trying to pound the round peg of their need into the square hole of the grant that's available, and that's a waste of time and energy. We need to improve the funding model so that it's level and it's predictable and it does address the additional responsibilities that have been downloaded onto our communities, all of the communities. There's no question that our major centres, Calgary and Edmonton for example, have tremendous needs and are underfunded, but I think that the issue is where the funding should come from. We certainly know that they do need to have more money coming back their way.

My company was one of the oil field service companies that endured the national energy program and survived. I went to Ottawa, in fact, and met with the energy minister, Marc Lalonde, to discuss why he was doing something that was so arbitrary and so harmful to western Canada, particularly Alberta. He didn't have any satisfactory answers. He basically said that he was putting us in our place, that we were getting too big for our britches. That wasn't a very satisfactory answer. It wasn't very comforting either because we were laying off people. We had families that were impacted by this.

I just don't think that the solution that's being proposed is the proper solution. The problem exists, and it's genuine, but the problem isn't that some counties have too much money. The problem is that communities, municipalities need to be better funded by the province, and there are ways to do this. One of the ways that you address issues like this, when revenues are the issue – it's probably true at the municipal level, too, but we certainly know it's true at the provincial level, and it's true for every business, and every businessman knows this – is that you cut your overhead when revenues are hurt. You don't cut your ability to provide the services. We've got a lot of overhead, I think, and a lot of waste in a lot of areas that need to be examined before we go about redistributing other people's wealth.

I certainly won't be supporting this, but I appreciate it being raised because it gives us an opportunity to talk about these issues, that are very real. Solutions need to be found. I just don't happen to think that this is the solution.

Thank you.

5:50

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and talk about Motion 501. For all the good reasons heard on both sides of the House, I too am against Motion 501.

I do want to highlight three things, though, first of all how the current system is working anyway. In my constituency I have two counties, Cypress county and Forty Mile county. I bumped into one of the county councillors on the weekend, and we discussed this briefly. He pointed out to me how his county had given some side of \$700,000 to the new Medicine Hat Arena, had given considerable financial help to our Esplanade in downtown Medicine Hat, which is the pride of arts and culture, and on the north side of town, close to Redcliff, had given considerable money to our Family Leisure Centre.

He also informed me that Forty Mile county, Redcliff, Bow Island, and Foremost, all the municipalities in my constituency, were great supporters of these things and had sat with the people in Medicine Hat and Redcliff and worked these things all out on a cost-sharing basis and on a fair basis.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to close debate on Motion 501.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to close this debate. Well, this was just so much fun. I'm really, really glad I brought this forward because this is an issue that I have been concerned about for some time. Some of you may remember that I brought forward a bill in 2009 – it's kind of like the Wildrose's but not as bad – looking to take a piece of the personal income tax and set it aside in a fund that could be redistributed to municipal areas.

I'm still trying. I'm willing to stand up for urban Albertans. I will do that. I am sorry that I have so many colleagues who will not, but that is certainly what we've seen today, and it does really crystallize for me part of the problem that we are having in Alberta.

I've heard a number of people stand up and say: "Oh, we have so much infrastructure we have to pay for. We really need all of that money." Well, not exactly, actually, because the provincial government is responsible for highways and secondary roads outside of municipalities. The municipality is paying for four or five blocks' or 10 or 20 blocks' worth of roads inside of their municipality, exactly the same way the city of Edmonton is, but they're not paying for miles and miles and miles of highways or bridges. That's what the province does. That's what that tax money is paying for. So don't tell me that this linear tax is needed for municipalities to pay for this stuff because it's not true.

"Everybody needs – needs – this tax for what they're going to do." Yeah, well, so do the urban areas. They need it as well and just as much. "Well, we need it for economic development because we're doing so badly in rural Alberta that we just need extra to help us with economic development and to revitalize." Well, you know what, kids? Edmonton and Calgary, Sundre, Whitecourt, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and any number of other towns, villages, and cities would also like to revitalize. Nobody is giving them money. No, because

we want to keep it in sparsely populated rural MDs and counties so they can have economic development all on their own.

“Well, we shouldn’t rob Peter to pay Paul.” Hmm. Well, folks, guess what? That goes both ways. The populated municipalities have been forgoing this revenue for a considerable period of time so that Peter could take all the money that Paul didn’t get. So I don’t buy that argument either.

Once again, we, I and the Liberal caucus, are willing to stand up for urban Albertans. We will admit that there is a problem, and I have now brought two solutions forward to this House, only to hear them always knocked down by people that are representing large tracts of rural Alberta. Most interesting. What does that tell us? And no one else has another suggestion. “Oh, you can’t do this. Don’t touch my stuff. Good idea. Just don’t do it this way.” But no one has another suggestion of what to do, so I invite them to actually come up and do the work with another suggestion.

The Member for Stony Plain suggested that the MSI was great and that the government had given all the MSI money and that that’s all everybody needed. Oh, for heaven’s sake. Give your head a shake. There is exactly the same amount of money for MSI in this budget as there was last budget and the budget before that. There is \$900 million in the budget for MSI funding. Please refer to page 174 of the estimates book and to vote 3.2, municipal sustainability initiative capital, \$871,000,000. Eight hundred and seventy-one million dollars.

What they’ve done that’s tricky this year is that they added in a grant that has always been given but not coupled with the MSI. So now we’ve got the basic municipal transportation grant added in there, and we get a subtotal there of \$1.2 billion. But not all of it is municipal funding. That’s including a grant that’s always been somewhere else. So there’s been no increase in MSI funding, and there isn’t going to be.

This government has never managed to come up to what they’ve been promising all the way along, and before this budget came out, they were promising \$1.6 billion. Did they meet that? No. So how exactly are these municipal areas – towns, villages, summer villages, Métis settlements, larger cities, smaller cities –

supposed to get this funding out of MSI when there’s been absolutely no increase whatsoever? [Ms Blakeman’s speaking time expired] Oh, darn. I was having so much fun.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

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

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

For the motion:

Blakeman	Quadri	Xiao
Brown	Sherman	Young
Hehr		

Against the motion:

Allen	Horne	Olesen
Barnes	Horner	Quest
Bhardwaj	Jeneroux	Rowe
Bikman	Johnson	Sandhu
Calahasen	Khan	Sarich
Campbell	Kubinec	Scott
Casey	Lemke	Starke
Dallas	Leskiw	Stier
Dorward	Luan	Towle
Drysdale	Lukaszuk	VanderBurg
Fenske	McDonald	Weadick
Goudreau	Oberle	Wilson
Griffiths		

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 37
---------	---------	--------------

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:09 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	107
Statement by the Speaker	
Commonwealth Day Message from the Queen	107
Introduction of Visitors	107
Introduction of Guests	107
Oral Question Period	
Provincial Borrowing	109
Provincial Budget	110
Premier's Office Budget	111
Misericordia Community Hospital	111
Highway 63 Safety	112
Electricity Pricing	112
Workforce Planning	113
School Construction	113
Child Poverty Reduction Strategy	114
Infrastructure Funding	115
Native Grassland Conservation	115
Travel Alberta Executive Expenses	116
Services for Seniors	116
Mobile Dialysis Service	117
Members' Statements	
Pipeline Development	117
Provincial Borrowing	118
Dr. David Schindler	118
Slave Lake Family Care Clinic	118
Paralympic Winter Games	119
Tax Policy	119
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	119
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 5 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2014	119
Tabling Returns and Reports	119
Orders of the Day	123
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 201 Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014	123
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Combined Low Expenditure Assessments	134
Division	141

If your address is incorrect, please clip on the dotted line, make any changes, and return to the address listed below. To facilitate the update, please attach the last mailing label along with your account number.

Subscriptions
Legislative Assembly Office
1001 Legislature Annex
9718 – 107 Street
EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E4

.....

Last mailing label:

Account # _____

New information:

Name:

Address:

.....

Subscription information:

Annual subscriptions to the paper copy of *Alberta Hansard* (including annual index) are \$127.50 including GST if mailed once a week or \$94.92 including GST if picked up at the subscription address below or if mailed through the provincial government interdepartmental mail system. Bound volumes are \$121.70 including GST if mailed. Cheques should be made payable to the Minister of Finance.

Price per issue is \$0.75 including GST.

Online access to *Alberta Hansard* is available through the Internet at www.assembly.ab.ca

Subscription inquiries:

Subscriptions
Legislative Assembly Office
1001 Legislature Annex
9718 – 107 St.
EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E4
Telephone: 780.427.1302

Other inquiries:

Managing Editor
Alberta Hansard
1001 Legislature Annex
9718 – 107 St.
EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E4
Telephone: 780.427.1875