



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday, March 19, 2014

Issue 11

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),  
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Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)  
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC),  
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Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND),  
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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),  
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Kennedy-Glans, Donna, QC, Calgary-Varsity (Ind)  
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),  
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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  
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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-Ste. Anne (PC),  
Government Whip  
Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (Ind)  
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: 58

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

Independent: 3

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

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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>

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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
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Culture
Thomas Lukaszuk	Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour
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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**

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 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.

Wednesday, March 19, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us pray. Almighty God and Holy Creator, help us to prioritize our duties that they might yield the maximum possible for our constituents. Help us be the voice for those who have none and depend upon us to speak for them. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is quite the privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a friend of freedom and democracy and an ardent defender of free speech, the MP for Westlock-St. Paul, Mr. Brian Storseth. Despite his young age Brian has been a Member of Parliament since 2006 and currently serves on the important Environment and Sustainable Development Committee. He is seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Let us begin with school groups. Edmonton-Centre, followed by Airdrie and Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Ms Blakeman:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, I am so excited. I just want to ask you if you could keep a secret and if the rest of my colleagues could keep a secret. This is my favourite school here today. With us today in the members' gallery we have 44 students from John A. McDougall school in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, and with them today are Ms Veronica Chong, Mr. Jesse Lalonde, and Ms Jill White, their teachers and aides. These students are inquisitive. They are so with it. They are hard working. They are diverse. Please help me welcome my favourite school.

**The Speaker:** As we wait for other guests to arrive, let us move to Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you some wonderful students from the Spruce View school in my riding along with their teachers and group leaders and parent helpers. The students came here today to understand the process of what we do here in the Legislature. I'd like the students to rise along with their teachers Mr. Joseph Amundrud; Brittany Seifried, who's a student teacher with us today; Ryan Johannson; and parent helpers Jennifer Harty, Linda Passakka, and Jolinda Savage. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there other students or student groups?

If not, let us move on to other guests, starting with the Minister of Health, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Horne:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm absolutely delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members today Ms Vickie Kaminski, who will commence her role as the new chief executive officer of Alberta Health Services on June 2 of this year. Ms Kaminski is well known in the world of health services, both for her time as a front-line worker as a registered nurse all the way through to her role as a senior leader in various health care systems. Throughout her 35-year career she has focused on quality of patient care and implementing best practice. I'm very confident that she shares the views of this government, that support for front-line staff in our health care system is her number one job. I'd ask my fellow members to join me in welcoming Ms Vickie Kaminski and ask her to rise and receive our warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood or Edmonton-Strathcona on behalf of, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Irene Gaudet, Brent Gibson, and Bev Hill. My guests are all members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees Legislative Committee. The Legislative Committee advises AUPE members on questions relating to the union's constitution. They are visiting the Legislature as guests of all three opposition parties to observe and learn more about parliamentary procedure. I would now ask Irene, Brent, and Bev to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two hard-working, passionate, and dedicated northern Albertans from Fort McMurray who are here today to demand action from their MLAs and from their government on a long-term care facility for their community. They have gathered a total of 6,100 names – and they'd like to mention that they are all of voting age – to advocate for a long-term care centre in the downtown. I'd ask that Joan Furber and Myrtle Dussault rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister – Services for Persons with Disabilities, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you two wonderful guests visiting us from Whitehorse, Yukon, Jean Kellogg and Don Black. They are here to observe the question period. They are parents of my EA, Erin Black. At this time I ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three members of AUPE's Legislative Committee. They are Gil Laflamme, John Barnes, and Karl Clauss. The Legislative Committee advises AUPE members on questions relating to the union's constitution, and they are visiting the Legislature today to

observe and learn more about parliamentary procedure. I'd like to thank all the AUPE members and let them know that the Alberta Liberals want to repeal Bill 45 and Bill 46 and stand up for pensioners, for AUPE, and the rest of the civil service. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Airdrie.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly my guests Valerie McAdoo and Mélanie Edison. Both Valerie and Mélanie are here today because they are very strong supporters of funding for public health care, in particular funding for in vitro fertilization, a procedure that could be publicly funded and save millions of dollars, resulting in fewer birth complications, fewer premature babies, and fewer neo intensive stays. I would ask Valerie and Mélanie to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie, followed by the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise and introduce through you and to you to all members of this Assembly 37 outstanding students from my old school, George McDougall high school. They are accompanied today by their teacher Mrs. Tammy Hodgson as well as parent helpers Mrs. Thaidra Walsh and Mr. Tim Fernandes. I'd ask them now to please rise and receive the warmest welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three municipal officials from southern Alberta who are strong representatives for their community. I'd ask that they rise as I mention their names. First, I have Cameron Gardner, the reeve of the MD of Ranchland; Henry Van Hierden, councillor, MD of Willow Creek; and last but not least, Suzanne Oel, councillor for the MD of Foothills. These individuals have expressed to me the importance of our Alberta first responder radio communications system and that we are fully funding this program, and it will start going online this year. I ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of all members.

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

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members three of my constituents here today from southern Alberta and Cardston-Taber-Warner. Steve Evanson is a neighbour of mine in Stirling, and Mitch Holst and Brian Gibson are from Taber. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Mr. Dorward:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure on behalf of the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations to stand and introduce you to Mr. David Kettles, who is a director with the department. Also, it's my pleasure to introduce my good friend Michael Reeves, who is the CEO of Ports-to-Plains Alliance, which Alberta is a key component in, a group of 10 states from the United States and Alberta who work together to drive forward

initiatives in that zone and that region. If they could please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

**1:40**

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you eight people from my constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat and Forty Mile county. First, I have Steve Wikkerink and his wife, Sonja. I have Gerald and Kathy Reimer, Chantel Timmons and her husband, Everett, and their two wonderful children, hockey player and 10-year-old Dacey and seven-year-old Keely. These people, of course, are rural Albertans who work very, very hard for rural Alberta. They were all instrumental in putting on the 100-year anniversary at Burdett last year, which the hon. Finance minister came down to enjoy. I would ask all eight to please rise and share in the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood, Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Bobby-Joe Rovensky and Hal Welke. Bobby-Joe and Hal are members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and sit on the Legislative Committee. Their main role is to advise AUPE members on issues relating to the union's constitution. Appropriately enough, as mentioned by the leader of the Liberal opposition, they are visiting the Legislature to observe and learn more about parliamentary procedure. Bobby-Joe and Hal are seated in the public gallery, and I'll ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there other introductions? Yes. We have the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Medicine Hat, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 18 members of the insurance brokers association of Alberta. We had a great conversation this morning regarding the flooding that happened last year in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and the impact on insurance for my constituents. I know that they also met with other members here today. They are seated in the visitors' gallery, and I would ask them to rise as I say their names: Gord Enders, Steve Hambly, Patti Hunt, Scott Treasure, Julia Marshall, Scott Romans, Robyn Young, Gerry Baert, Mitch Holst, Jody Lohr, Gord Cowan, Catherine Cake, George Hodgson, Caleb Maksymchuk, Steve Evanson, Christina Rankin, Lorrie King, and Rikki McBride. I ask that everybody please give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Okay. We're actually going to go to Medicine Hat next, followed by the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very special individual. Mr. Gord Cowan was my campaign manager in the 2012 provincial election, and he was previously introduced. I am very happy to say that I am here because of Gord's hard work, but if you're unhappy I'm here, talk to Gord. Gord, I'd ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of the county of Grande Prairie, who I see just joined us. They've been here for the AAMD and C convention for the last few days, and I know they have meetings in the building this afternoon. I would ask them to stand: Reeve Leanne Beaupre; CAO Bill Rogan; Daryl Beeston, councillor; and Herb Pfau, superintendent, public works. I think that's all that's with you. Please give them a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Long-term Care in Fort McMurray

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray is one of Canada's fastest growing cities. It is the economic driver of our province and home to one of the most robust workforces in the world. It literally gushes cash into the provincial coffers. However, the very individuals who helped build Fort McMurray continue to be neglected and ignored by this PC government. During the 2008 election then Premier Ed Stelmach made a promise: his government would build a much-needed long-term care centre downtown to care for its seniors.

It is now 2014, still no shovel in the ground. Seniors in need of long-term care are either forced from the community all the way to Edmonton or, for those that remain in Fort McMurray, they live on the third and the fourth floors of a hospital in acute-care beds that were never intended to be long-term care spaces.

Seniors and their families want the facility to be built downtown, in the heart of the very community that they built. The PCs, however, made a political decision, and they approved the facility to be built in a remote location, far removed from amenities, separating couples and separating families. In the 2012 election both Fort McMurray MLAs were clear – very clear – that if elected, they would fight to have the long-term care facility built downtown, not in Parsons Creek but downtown. However, since the election they can only seem to either stay silent or blame the federal government for provincial responsibilities.

It's time to stop blaming the federal government, it's time for this government to keep their promise to the community of Fort McMurray, and it's time for these elected MLAs to stand up for their community and their constituents.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

#### Mental Health Services

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. A recent report shows that the PC legacy of chaos in our health care system is carrying over into mental health. We're paying \$750 million a year with no systemic planning for these services. The GAP-MAP, authored by Dr. Cam Wild, makes several key conclusions, including that existing services do not provide sufficient care to meet the needs of Alberta adults, that the system is reactive and focused on acute care, and that there is no standardized way of referring to mental health services between Alberta Health Services zones, the government, and contracted agencies. The GAP-MAP illustrates how this government's failure to provide adequate, affordable

public counselling services has forced Albertans into neglecting mental health care, something that costs us more in acute services in the long run.

When the Alberta New Democrats released our recommendations on how to properly invest the \$1 billion increase in health transfer payments from the federal government, we called for an additional \$100 million for treatment for mental health and addictions in this province. We believe that by strategically organizing our mental health and addictions treatments and funding qualified counsellors within the public system, we can start to ensure that Albertans have access to long-term care and treatment options for mental health that will improve the quality of life for all.

This PC government has shortchanged Alberta's health care system by \$400 million in the 2014 budget and failed to invest in fixing the patchwork of services that currently make up our mental health services. Albertans who rely on these services deserve better, Mr. Speaker, than the mess that this PC government has created.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

#### Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2013 Alberta's population exceeded the 4 million mark. This is not surprising given that people from all over the country – in fact, all over the world – are moving here because of our strong economy. Our province's economic growth has surpassed the rest of the country's for the last two years, and people look to our province as a model for fiscal and social responsibility.

In 10 years Alberta's population is expected to exceed 5 million people, and in order to prepare for this influx, our government has implemented a strong and realistic fiscal plan to ensure the province's continued success. This plan supports our vision for the infrastructure needs of our province today and tomorrow. Apart from delivering a \$2.6 billion operational surplus this year, our capital plan over the next three years invests more than \$19 billion for much-needed infrastructure projects. Day to day I hear from my constituents that they want schools, hospitals, and safe, well-maintained roads and highways. That is why our government has a capital plan that includes 155 school projects, seven postsecondary projects, 24 health facility projects, 258 kilometres of new and twinned roads, and the rehabilitation of 2,500 kilometres of our highways.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a rational and optimistic plan for the infrastructure needs of the province. We can't and we won't delay these projects. When our population reaches 5 million in 10 years, we will all be thankful that we invested in the future of Alberta today.

Thank you.

1:50

#### Statement by the Speaker

#### Rotation of Questions Oral Question Period Practices

**The Speaker:** Just before we start the clock, hon. members, we have a unique situation today. The independent Member for Calgary-Varsity will be taking the sixth spot today instead of tomorrow. Tomorrow, should the Member for Calgary-Foothills be here, he would take that spot. That is an arrangement that I have approved due to extenuating circumstances. Since independent members are only allowed one question per week, that's the

only way we could make our complicated and mathematical formula work, so I hope you will abide me in that regard.

You all know the 35-second rule for a question and the 35-second rule for an answer. I will give you five seconds of warning so that nobody feels offended that I cut them off. You all know the no preamble rule after the fifth spot. And could we please cease with the interjections? Yesterday 22 interjections were noted. I chose not to rise on any of them, but eight of them were given by one hon. member. Please, let's listen to each other's questions, let's listen to each other's answers, and we shall go from there.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

#### Alberta Health Services Administration Costs

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the culture of entitlement in the PC cabinet is clear, but it extends far beyond that. We've learned that the number of Alberta Health Services managers and bureaucrats earning more than \$100,000 a year has gone up 50 per cent in the last four years. Between 2009 and 2013 AHS hired or promoted an additional 1,231 non front-line staff with salaries over \$100,000. That's nearly one bureaucrat every single day. To the Health minister: wouldn't these dollars be better spent on the front lines?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have no idea where the hon. member may be getting her information from, and that's not the first time I would have had this question. What I can tell you is that Alberta Health Services, through an organizational review that was done last summer, has reduced the number of vice-presidents from 80 to 10, has flattened the organization by three management levels, and has rededicated the role of all managers in that organization to supporting front-line staff.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we got it through a freedom of information request.

Albertans are tired of watching the bloated health care bureaucracy get bigger while wait times for procedures and treatments get longer. Albertans continue to pay more and more to fund their health care system, and they continue to get worse and worse results. This is a prime example of why: more money for managers, less money for patients. To the Health minister: when is he going to get AHS under control?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member shows once again how little she understands the complexity of health care organizations and the fact that she has absolutely no appreciation that this is a 100,000-person organization, the fifth-largest employer in Canada, and the best health care system in Canada. Again, we never have the benefit of the information that she's using. But we know that many, many of these positions are directly involved in the support of front-line staff in managing patient care, large complex hospitals, and community programs.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what I do know about how much these health care managers are costing Alberta taxpayers: more than \$120 million a year. Here's what that money could actually do. Patients would be able to get 5,000 insulin pumps or 1,000 hip and knee replacements or 200 long-term care beds and 170 full-time nurses. It's a matter of priorities: a larger payroll for bureaucrats or shorter wait times for patients. To the Health minister: which does he think Albertans would rather have?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, what Albertans would like to have is members of this House who are not members of the government caucus stand up in support and defence and speak with pride about the work that they do each and every day to deliver health care to Albertans. This hon. member has in one fell swoop just demonized and invalidated the work of everyone in that organization that earns over \$100,000. This is the height of irresponsibility, it reflects a lack of understanding that knows no bounds in any Legislative Assembly that I know of in this province, and it's blatantly false and irresponsible.

**The Speaker:** Second main set of questions. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Smith:** We stand up for front-line workers every single day.

#### Probation Services for Aboriginal Youth

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, this government is taking in record revenues and taking on record amounts of debt, yet they still make the most callous budget cuts in places that hurt Albertans. Jodene McIsaac has worked for more than 20 years counselling high-risk native youth as a probation officer. Her work undoubtedly saves the justice system many times her salary, but her employer just found out that this uncaring government won't renew her contract. To the Justice minister: how does he justify this decision?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to advise this hon. member that there actually are no cuts in this particular area. I have every confidence in the individuals that work within our ministry that they will be able to provide the services needed to these individuals in a culturally sensitive manner.

**Ms Smith:** Native Albertans are massively overrepresented in the justice system. The program that Jodene McIsaac has worked on for over two decades is the only one that specifically targets native youth at risk. The Justice ministry says that Jodene's specialized clientele can be absorbed by other probation officers, who already have a huge number of clients. These young people could be helped, but they're falling through the cracks. Can the minister find \$80,000 of waste somewhere else in his government to be able to restore this program?

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, the preamble to that member's question is unfortunately incorrect because my ministry also has its own youth probation officer in Edmonton who has a specialized aboriginal caseload, again, designed to provide the services that these at-risk people need but also in a financially appropriate manner with a view to taxpayers' interests as well.

**Ms Smith:** Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: \$80,000 is a rounding error on the sum total of all the bad decisions this cabinet and this government make in a single week. This government employs communications people more than any other government of its size. Our ministries have deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers and chiefs of staff to chief assistant deputy ministers and executive advisers to assistant deputy ministers. How is it that this government can employ all of those advisers, but it can't find \$80,000 to support a program that actually makes a difference and saves money?

**Mr. Denis:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, I as the minister responsible for this department have absolutely every confidence in the ministry's employees that they will be able to provide these types



of services to the at-risk youth. These people are well trained, these people work hard, and these people are culturally sensitive to these particular aboriginal youths. I think that this member would appreciate that.

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

**Ms Smith:** More misplaced priorities, Mr. Speaker.

#### Disaster Recovery Program Claims

**Ms Smith:** I've been criticizing the flood maps for quite some time. Let me tell you about Doug Kingsford of Calgary-Elbow. He's complained to his MLA and has gotten nowhere. His home had 13 feet of water in it: no buyout. His neighbour four houses away had 18 inches of water in his basement, and he was bought out. This example shows that the flood maps are clearly wrong, and the government has to know it. Will the minister stop making arbitrary decisions on buyouts based on maps that everyone knows are wrong?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we work with the tools that we have in front of us. Clearly, we've learned a great deal from the floods of this past year. There's a lot of work going on to try and understand the learnings from these tremendous floods that we experienced throughout southern Alberta. But the flood maps are the flood maps that we're working with, which is the knowledge we had prior to the floods last spring. Those are the facts. That's how the program was designed in order to give Albertans a choice about how to move forward with their lives.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, they should have redrawn the flood maps before they started the flood payout program, like we said.

Mr. Kingsford has also experienced the capriciousness of LandLink. Everything in his basement and main floor was destroyed. Most of those items are on the list of the things that DRP is supposed to pay out. LandLink visited his home, yet the money he has been sent doesn't match up with the money he was supposed to get. When he asks questions, he gets no answers. Is this how the minister thinks LandLink should be handling these files?

**Mr. Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work going on for a lot of people on behalf of a lot of people. As the hon. member has enquired earlier, we made a clear indication that we've created a transition agreement with LandLink in order to transition them out of this role over the next year. But the important thing is that we are working with every single Albertan who has filed a claim. We're making sure that they are eligible, to respect them, to ensure that they are looked after, and protecting the taxpayer.

2:00

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, claimants want LandLink fired. Mr. Kingsford hasn't been given enough to fix his home. He is like so many other homeowners in High River, Exshaw, Canmore, Bragg Creek, Elbow Park, and elsewhere whose lives were turned upside down by the flood. The government has let them down. LandLink has victimized them. We hear talk of a \$6 billion flood, but that money has not gone to the folks who have lost everything. Doesn't this government care that they have let so many Albertans down?

**Mr. Hughes:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that would be just a misstatement of the facts. In fact, the government of Alberta has

provided nearly 5,000 DRP payments as of last week, 4,700 by the end of last week. I know they're going out the door quickly as we speak: over \$48 million to individuals; in addition, millions and millions more to communities, to municipalities to ensure that we protect Albertans for the future as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

#### Flood Recovery Communications Contract

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The closer I look at the lucrative, sole-sourced, untendered Navigator contract, the more concerned I get. Does the government completely lack judgment, or does it intentionally reward members of the PC family? Maybe it's both. A one-quarter-million-dollar contract for crisis communications allegedly began on July 18, 2013, but it wasn't even signed until October 28, just three days before it expired. To the Premier: the only crisis that existed when the contract was signed was your upcoming leadership race. Why did you waste a quarter of a million dollars of taxpayers' money?

**Mr. Hughes:** I believe the hon. member is referring to some contracts that were provided under a sole-sourced mechanism in the crisis of the flood of last summer. That includes Tervita, includes Navigator, includes Norex, and includes Stantec. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that when the minister responsible for this program, for responding on behalf of Albertans, reached out, he reached out for talented, class A organizations that could step up and support the province of Alberta to meet the needs of Albertans in a crisis, and they served them well.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, the contracts represented by the Minister of Municipal Affairs were given by Executive Council. Navigator and its contract staff list is a who's who of Tory land. It's headed by a person the Premier calls a friend, managed by a guy who ran the last two PC election campaigns, includes an adviser to the current Premier and predecessor, and then there are the Minister of Health's former chief of staff and the then-minister of Municipal Affairs' PC leadership campaign adviser. To the Premier or the minister: is the real reason you didn't tender out this quarter-million-dollar contract because you wanted to keep it in the PC family?

**Mr. Hughes:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the work by Navigator related to the floods included strategic communications advice, research on flood recovery, a communications strategy. Albertans were asking – in fact, the associate ministers were on the ground, and they clearly identified a strong need for clear communications to people who were in need, in crisis, responding to the flood. We responded with people we knew could deliver on behalf of Albertans, and they did that.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, they delivered all right: a quarter of a million dollars of taxpayers' money to their buddies.

At first glance I thought Navigator's quarter-million-dollar contract was for three months' worth of work, and I thought that was pretty rich. But if you go by when it was actually signed to when it was allegedly completed, it works out to a quarter of a million dollars for three days of work. That's \$83,333.33 per day. One of the contractual obligations was to file weekly activity reports. To the Minister: will you please table those reports today, or do you need some time to back out of those as well?

**Mr. Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, this work was done in the middle of a very difficult circumstance in support of the Public Affairs Bureau. They provided advice to the Public Affairs Bureau. As we all recall, many, many very talented people within the government of Alberta were fully deployed throughout the flood-affected areas. They were out there working with Albertans, helping them to recover, and this enabled them to help ensure that Albertans were also well informed as a result.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

### Government Effectiveness

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans want to know how the PC Party work plan will affect them and how it will affect the functioning of this government, yet the Premier has avoided the question. She's avoided it all week long. Since she's now taking direction from the PC executive, will she please tell Albertans what is in the work plan and how it will affect the work of the government?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier and this government take our work very seriously on behalf of Albertans. We've said that we have a building Alberta plan, which invests in families and communities, ensures that government lives within its means, and opens new markets for Albertans. That's important work that we do every day. Our party supports that work. Our party worked very hard to get us elected so that we could do that work based on the values of Albertans. That's what Albertans responded to in the campaign, and that's what they're responding to now, good government from people who understand that this is all about the future of this province. We care about that future.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, if the Premier really cared about her responsibilities, she'd show up for work.

This Premier was elected on a promise to end child poverty in five years, yet three of five budgets have gone by, and there has been no mention of that commitment. In fact, there are significant cuts to the poverty reduction programs in this budget. To the Premier: does your work plan include keeping your promise to end child poverty in Alberta?

**Mr. Campbell:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, this government and this Premier work every day to improve the quality of life for every Albertan, with a particular focus on supporting vulnerable Albertans to make sure that they get a good start, to make sure that there's an education system in place. Education in the long term is what will defeat the poverty cycle. The other supports that families need to be strong are also a very significant part of this government's job. This Premier showed up this morning to the AAMD and C and had two standing ovations from the AAMD and C because they appreciate the work that this Premier does and that this government does.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader has made a point of order. I realize that I was not supposed to draw attention to the repeated absence of the Premier, so I will apologize.

This Premier promised full-day kindergarten in the last election. So far, Mr. Speaker, it's another broken promise. Alberta children deserve the best possible start on their education. I want to ask the Premier or whoever is speaking on her behalf: does your PC work

plan involve keeping your promise to Alberta families for full-day kindergarten? Yes or no?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, while this hon. member plays the clown, our Premier goes out on behalf of Albertans every day: opening new markets, investing in families and communities, and making sure that we live within our means while we do it. The particular focus that this Premier has on vulnerable Albertans is not lost on Albertans. In fact, they've stepped up each and every day to work with this government. Not-for-profit organizations, volunteers, and others in our community have worked very hard for vulnerable Albertans to make sure that our kids get a good start. Our Minister of Education is doing that every day, this government is doing that every day, and our Premier is doing that every day.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, that was really an uncalled-for statement. You might want to review it and make a comment about it later. I may invite you to do that.

Let's move on. Calgary-Varsity.

### Alberta Future Fund

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Calgary-Varsity want assurance that this government is spending our money in a disciplined way. Many are encouraged by the fiscal discipline and logic reflected in the Minister of Finance's approach to the budget, but many were also startled by the government's Bill 1 and, in particular, the creation of a \$2 billion Alberta future fund for such a vague purpose. To the Minister of Finance: why did you need a special fund earmarked for such a purpose?

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

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 1 was debated here in the House. It was passed here in this Legislative Assembly. As part of Bill 1 the Alberta future fund is really reflecting the vision that previous Premiers have had, like Premier Lougheed when he talked about the heritage savings trust fund being something that would be used for transformational items in the province in the future, for Albertans of today and tomorrow. The idea is that any decision to spend funds from that fund has to be made here in this Legislature by way of a resolution. It has the added benefit of having that debate.

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given the promise to consult with Albertans on how our heritage fund monies will be spent, how were Albertans consulted about this idea of creating a special \$2 billion Alberta future fund?

2:10

**Mr. Horner:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, it is a good question, and I'm glad the hon. member asked it. We had 12 open houses around the province this past year. We had numerous presentations . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Fortune-telling.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, hon. member.

We had numerous presentations made to us about how we should get the savings that we have to work for us, not just sit in an account to never be spent. The idea of Premier Lougheed – and I mentioned it in this House – when he set up the Alberta heritage

savings trust fund, was that 20 per cent of the fund would actually be spent on assets and future endeavours.

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Finally, again to the Finance minister: do you plan to come back to Albertans to talk about the specifics of how this \$2 billion will be spent?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, indeed I plan to come back to this House. If future members want to bring forward a resolution to release funds from this fund, that's exactly where it comes, into this Legislature. I welcome Albertans to provide us with ideas as to what they see as transformative ideas for the future, for the purposes of this fund. I welcome ideas coming from our municipalities. In fact, even the municipality the hon. member is from, I'm sure, has some ideas as to how they could help transform Alberta today and in the future. We were asked today, Mr. Speaker, about the long-term vision of our province at AAMD and C. This is part of that, setting a stage.

### Long-term Care in Fort McMurray

**Mrs. Towle:** Mr. Speaker, this PC government has allowed the long-term care situation in Fort McMurray to deteriorate to a crisis stage. After promising to build the facility there in 2008, they are no closer to having one up and running than the day Premier Ed Stelmach first made that promise. This project has been bogged down by indecision, mismanagement, and petty politics. Health minister, when will your government stop the political rhetoric, keep your government's promise, and get this facility built downtown, where it's most wanted and needed?

**Mr. Quest:** Mr. Speaker, I was recently in Fort McMurray, met with the local councillors and seniors groups about seniors' accommodations now and in the future. Even the community's current needs cannot be met with the downtown Willow Square site alone. This government is ready to move ahead now with the residents at Parsons Creek, but we've been unable to secure the necessary permits from the municipality to build there. The Minister of Infrastructure has been working with the federal government to secure the Willow Square land for some kind of a potential partnership, so the work goes on. We are very much aware of the needs, and we're ready to act now.

**Mrs. Towle:** Well, clearly, this member was not at the same meeting because even the mayor has come out and said that she'll actually give the land.

Given that this government talks about supporting local autonomy and given that the MD and the council of Fort McMurray and surrounding areas have unanimously passed a resolution to have the building put in the downtown location, why is this government continuing to ignore the autonomy of council, the community, and, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, everyday families?

**Mr. McIver:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Legislature to welcome the hon. member to the building Alberta plan. Thereafter, I would like to point out that the fact is that the government of Alberta already owns 25 per cent of that land; the federal government owns 75 per cent. So the municipality or the mayor has no ability to do that. In fact, I've been in contact with the federal government in support with the MLAs from Fort McMurray. I think we could have this land in our hand any day now because we've had what I would characterize as fairly productive conversations, and we'll go ahead, building Alberta.

**Mrs. Towle:** It's always so sad when the minister stands up and doesn't even understand the issue.

Given that Fort McMurray's two MLAs were elected on a firm commitment to fight tooth and nail to have the facility built downtown and not at Parsons Creek and given that since the election they've been utterly silent other than to blame the federal government for this debacle, to the Associate Minister for Accountability, Transparency, and Transformation: how transparent is it to abandon your key campaign promises in favour of saving your own political skin within your PC Party?

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise and answer this question. This government is building Alberta, and part of that plan is to build a long-term care facility in Fort McMurray. [interjection] We have a wider vision. We support the municipal vision for a site downtown, and we also have a vision to have a long-term care centre in Parsons Creek. This government is going to deliver long-term care in Fort McMurray. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Let me stop the clock for a moment, Mr. Clerk, please.

### Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have so far counted 15 inappropriate interjections. I have your names, and I have your titles all listed down here. I would like for there to be no more.

Unfortunately, the people listening to this on the radio or watching it on television don't hear all the interjections here that our visitors hear. But when it gets to the point that I can't hear the question or the answer, then something is really wrong because those questions and those answers go through me. Even right now some of you are heckling, Airdrie for example. It's not necessary. I have ministers over here who are taking the bait from someone over there and vice versa. I would just like us to please have this be the only interjection I have to make today.

Let's start the clock and go on.

### Educational Curriculum Redesign

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of attention given lately to the Minister of Education's efforts to redesign the provincial curriculum. Opponents are misleading parents and causing worry and uncertainty. Last night the opposition cold-called some of these parents to further spread misinformation. However, some Albertans who identified themselves as Wildrose supporters refuted the opposition's claim and confirmed that basic facts and skills are being taught. My question is to the Minister of Education. Who can we believe?

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

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Yeah. Talk about backfiring, Mr. Speaker. Last night the opposition held a tele town hall and tried to further propagate their spin, and they were called out. Several of the parents and teachers that were out there spoke up against the opposition's rhetoric at their own tele town hall, like Wildrose supporter Laurie, who works in a school and said, quote, kids are taught basic math skills; or Carol, a math tutor, who said, and I quote, the basics are included; or Keith, who is a dad, who's impressed with the curriculum and said, quote, I was blown away with that type of learning. The opposition needs to stop disparaging our teachers and educators and students.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. First supplemental.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister confirm that with the curriculum redesign Alberta students will continue to learn fundamental skills?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. They already are, and they are expected to, and we'll even strengthen that through curriculum redesign. Our curriculum redesign will be cutting edge. It'll be comprehensive, dynamic, and rigorous. But there's no rush on this. We'll work to get it right, and we'll work with Albertans, but we reject the insulting allegations of the opposition. We need to empower our teachers. They're the pros. They know best. We can best leverage their expertise by making our curriculum continuously better so that we continue to individualize learning in our increasingly diverse classrooms.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, to the minister: given that I hear from teachers who are concerned about these attacks on Inspiring Education, what is your commitment to moving forward with its ideals and objectives?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, Inspiring Education is a result of unprecedented consultation with Albertans, everyone from parents to teachers to employers to school board superintendents to students. It's by Albertans. It's for Albertans. It's Albertans' vision for education. I want teachers and school boards out there to know that we're committed to it. We'll stand by them as they fight through the empty rhetoric. While the opposition may want to dismantle it, we'll stand up for it. This government is for Inspiring Education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Airdrie, you can – oh, you've switched spots?

**Mr. McAllister:** Yeah.

**The Speaker:** Chestermere-Rocky View, go ahead.

**Mr. McAllister:** It seemed appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

Last night my leader and I hosted a telephone town hall with Albertans. [interjections] Thirty-five thousand people took part at some point last night. A teacher called in saying that in his school junior high teachers are questioning elementary teachers about why they are having to reteach the basics. The Education minister seems oblivious to what's going on. If all this is well, why are junior high teachers asking elementary teachers why they have to reteach the basics?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, one, I think, that we've acknowledged. Through the curriculum redesign we're going to re-emphasize the basics. It's not a matter of basics or inquiry-based learning; it's both. We want our kids to have the basics, but we want them to be able to apply those to problem solving. We need to listen to employers and look at global best practices as well as look at some of the petitions and the rhetoric coming out of the opposition. It's interesting that they would cut off the speakers in the call last night that didn't agree with their rhetoric.

**Mr. McAllister:** Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of Albertans would disagree with this gentleman.

Given that this same teacher also told us that elementary school teachers respond to the junior high teachers by saying that we, too, have to reteach the basics because the fundamentals aren't being

properly taught, does the minister not see that there is a problem here that needs addressing, or will he continue to bury his head in the sand and ignore teachers and parents?

2:20

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many questions we want to waste in the House, asking the same question over and over and over. This member asked on March 4 if I would "do the right thing and ensure, not provide an option but ensure, that the fundamentals of mathematics like times tables are taught in our schools," and I said: yes, I will. I've said: yes, I will. I said: yes, we will. We're doing a curriculum redesign, and we're going to make sure that the foundational pieces of literacy and numeracy are emphasized throughout all subjects. We said we will, but it's not one or the other.

It's interesting. Last night on the call with Dr. Tran-Davies, whom they tried to put in a box and say that all she's trying to purport is that we teach basics . . .

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. McAllister:** I do take exception to one point. Not one question on education is a waste of time in this House. [interjections]

The minister's spin is being exposed. Parents, teachers, experts are loud and clear on this issue. Does he realize that what he's saying contradicts what tens of thousands of Albertans say is actually happening in our schools every day, or has his government clearly lost touch with how regular, everyday Albertans feel?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I think every one of the callers on that call last night was a regular, everyday Albertan, but they didn't want to hear from everyone. They cut off the ones that didn't agree with their rhetoric. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I think it's shameful that this party would purport to Albertans that our system is on the skids, as this member has said, that our numbers, our test scores, have fallen by 30 per cent internationally, which of course we know is not true. It's a 2 and a half per cent decrease. [interjections] We have incredible school board trustees, incredible teachers, and an incredible curriculum. They're doing a heck of a good job. We have one of the best systems on the entire planet, but we can make it better.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

**The Speaker:** Second reminder, hon. members. You know, there's little that I can do to help keep control in this Assembly if you're not able to control yourselves. So again I ask with the utmost respect: please, listen to the questions even if you don't like them; listen to the answers even if you don't like them. Let's try and make some progress here, as is expected of us.

Calgary-Buffalo, let's hear how you do, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

#### **Drilling in Urban Areas**

**Mr. Hehr:** For close to two years we've been hearing from this government that they would be bringing forth an urban drilling policy. Today, unbelievably, we learn that the Minister of Energy is – get this – appointing a task force to review urban drilling. To the minister: why do you continue to shirk your responsibilities to the Alberta people by delaying? Why not just show some real-life leadership and produce this policy?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said the other day, it's important for me to be able to hear from Albertans. I have spoken with our two outstanding MLAs that represent the region. I've spoken with the mayor and will continue to speak to people in the Lethbridge region to find out some issues. It's also about education, making sure people already know what rules apply, what kind of setbacks apply. To go out and talk to people, which they have asked us to do, is responsible, and I'm doing what Albertans are asking.

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, that answer was complete and utter bunk, and the minister knows it.

Your ministry has said for two years that they were going to produce a policy. Where is the policy, and when are you going to stop hiding behind these task forces and get on with the business of providing families and communities with certainty around urban drilling?

**Mrs. McQueen:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is using the word "task force." What I've talked about is having round-tables, that we're going to bring people together at. We're going to bring in people in northern Alberta, in central Alberta, and in southern Alberta to make sure that people, first of all, understand the rules that we have in place. The safety of Albertans is first and foremost. We want to make sure that the evacuation plans are in place, whether you live in urban or rural Alberta. But, first and foremost, people want the education piece so they actually understand what the rules are that we have in place today.

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, I'm befuddled here, so I'll ask it again. Your ministry has been at this for two years. They've stated for two years they would develop an urban drilling policy. Are you guys unable to do this? Are you incompetent? What is the problem, that you cannot deliver an urban drilling policy despite all the rhetoric from that side?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have said from day one, since I've been the Minister of Energy, that we will develop an urban drilling policy, but we'll do it based on facts, do it based on education. Currently, depending the level of sour in these wells, they go from setbacks of either 100 metres to 1,500 metres. There is a lot of information that needs to be shown and given to Albertans first, and as I have said already, we will have an urban drilling policy, but we'll do it in consultation with urban and rural Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, those answers just aren't good enough.

The government promised a review of urban fracking and a set of rules in 2012, then they promised to review a set of rules in 2013, and then they promised a definitive set of rules for right about now. Instead, we're getting another review or, excuse me, a round-table. This record would be a parody of a government – it would be funny – if it didn't actually come from this government's refusal to represent the most obvious of public interests over those of oil and gas. To the minister: when will this government stand up for Albertans and tell industry, "No urban drilling"?

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government stands up for Albertans every single day of the week in Alberta. It is

important. The drilling in this province provides great economic development in this province, but we make sure that we take care of the environmental concerns and the safety concerns every time an application goes before the regulator. Those are the rules that they look at to make sure that there are safety issues there. All of those are part of the regulatory process, and that is what is looked at before any – any – application is approved in urban or rural Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that a poll in Lethbridge found that 76 per cent of residents want a ban on urban drilling and given that the mayor, the town council, and both school boards have all publicly stated the same and given that you just got a petition with 11,000 signatures on it asking for a ban, can the minister tell this Assembly just how many tens of thousands of regular Albertans it takes to earn the same influence as one phone call from your friends in the oil and gas industry?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said the other day to the House, there is no application even before the regulator. The discussion on urban drilling and the discussion on drilling in this province are important discussions regardless of where you live because safety issues, making sure we have the rules, all of those are very important to my people who live in rural Alberta, to all of the people in Alberta, whether you live in urban or rural Alberta. We are looking at all of this, but we're making sure that we're balancing this and making sure that we're having the time to go through this properly.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this minister has had more than enough time.

Now, given that this task force is, in fact, just another delay tactic by this government to serve their friends in oil and gas and given that the issue of fracking within a few hundred metres of homes and schools and playgrounds is a no-brainer to most Albertans and only requires more study if someone has lost all sense of their democratic obligation to the citizens they represent, why won't this minister stand up for regular Albertans and ban urban drilling now?

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I stand up every day for Albertans, urban or rural Albertans. I have talked to other communities that are cities as well, that are urban municipalities, such as the city of Medicine Hat, other municipalities that are urban that actually like and appreciate having the development in their communities. It does not matter where we do development in this province as long as it is done safely and through a strong regulatory process. That's what's really important. What's important is that we're talking to Albertans, and that's exactly what I'm going to do at this round-table, listen to the people who count. Those people are the Albertans here in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Stony Plain.

#### Building Alberta Plan Advertising

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This out-of-touch PC government just can't learn from its mistakes. The budget for their partisan Building Alberta sign campaign has been increased to \$1.9 million from \$1.7 million last year. Our FOIP found another \$200,000 spent by the Infrastructure minister. To the minister: I know your party is struggling to raise money, but do you really

think taxpayers want to keep funding this PC Party advertising campaign instead of building Alberta, building the roads, schools, hospitals, and long-term . . .

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

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the hon. member is sensitive about us telling Albertans what we would build that they wouldn't. I understand he's unhappy about that. In fact, when Albertans see those signs, they know a school is going to be there. I can tell you that in my municipality when they see a sign from the development saying "a school," they don't believe it. When they see a Building Alberta sign, they know a school is going to be there. It matters to them. When they're going down the highway and they see a sign, they want to know what's going on in the construction. It matters. It's good information for Albertans. They want that information. We'll continue to build Alberta and give the information.

2:30

**Mr. Barnes:** Wildrose would do the projects, we wouldn't burden the next generation, and we would not politicize the process.

Mr. Speaker, given that this government can't seem to find money for many needed projects like the Strathcona community hospital, the Misericordia, the 50 new schools it promised in 2012, the Fort McMurray hospital, and Fort McMurray long-term community care, does the minister think his new sign money could be better spent, or do you even care?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact is that we're building the infrastructure that matters to Albertans. That side wouldn't burden Albertans with classrooms. They wouldn't burden Albertans with highways. They wouldn't burden Albertans with the hospitals that they need. We're actually building them. We're building in a responsible way that makes financial sense, and we're doing it on a schedule. They'd have people waiting until they're 16 to start grade 1 instead of six. We're building schools today, when they're needed.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

**The Speaker:** Enough. You see what's happened? One side baits the other, then the other side, and then it gets out of control, and we can't hear each other.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** They don't answer the questions.

**The Speaker:** And I particularly don't like it, Calgary-Fish Creek, when you speak while I'm speaking. Show some respect for the chair regardless of who's in it.

Final supplemental. Now, let's listen carefully to the question – I'm sure it'll be a good one – and let's listen to the answer, which I hope will be equally good. Let's hear how it goes.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would build Alberta and balance the budget.

#### **Building Alberta Plan Advertising (continued)**

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that a hospital in Wainwright is currently facing closure due to a potential sewage backup because of this

PC government's neglect, will the minister recommit this money from these PC partisan signs to upgrading the Wainwright health centre and for once put the needs of Albertans ahead of the needs of the PC Party?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans' needs are the only needs we consider every single day when we come into this House, and we decide what those needs are by listening to Albertans. I know there's partisan rhetoric that sounds good, but in fact the building Alberta plan is designed after listening to what Albertans want: the hospitals, the schools, the roads, the other infrastructure. That's what we've been doing. That's what we'll continue to do. I know the hon. member doesn't like to tell Albertans how much we're doing that they wouldn't do, but we're going to continue to do it because that's what Albertans sent us here to do, and that's what we're doing under this Premier. We're delivering on the building Alberta plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### **Provincial Debt**

**Mr. Lemke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day we hear from the opposition and this government's critics about our rising debt. In my constituency people are asking: how can we go around touting our excellent financial situation and announce more infrastructure projects while we are borrowing to build these projects? To the minister of the Treasury Board and Finance: what am I supposed to tell my constituents about our growing debt in this province?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, the borrowing plan that we have is strategic. It's responsible. We only borrow for the infrastructure that Albertans need today because we're building it today. The opposition has already talked about deferring the capital plan out into the out-years, but they don't tell Albertans which school they'd defer, which hospital from the list that the hon. member just rattled off they would defer. Borrowing to build now protects Albertans from construction cost increases each year, which are guaranteed to go up. With our population growing by almost 300 people a day, the people need these infrastructure projects today, not in the future. They'll have tangible assets. Ideological opposition to any . . .

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Lemke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how will we address the repayment of debt if there are drastic changes in interest rates?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. It's true that our triple-A credit rating, that we have and hold dear, allows us to lock in the lowest possible rates, and right now interest rates are probably the lowest they've been in 50 years. The borrowing program isn't like a personal line of credit, that can be affected by fluctuating interest rates. We're selling bonds, many of them with 20- or five- or 10- or 30-year amortizations. The interest we pay on those bonds is locked in for their maturity, and we set aside money each year to match up that maturity.

I was going to say that the ideological opposition to any other form of finance besides cash is not good financial management, Mr. Speaker. It's fanaticism.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary.

**Mr. Lemke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure risks associated with borrowing for capital projects are mitigated?

**Mr. Horner:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, government has taken concrete, legislative steps to keep our debt well under control. We have limited borrowing, placed a cap on debt servicing . . .

**Mr. Anderson:** Please keep talking. Just keep talking.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Airdrie, for God's sake, enough is enough.

**Mr. Anderson:** I'm so sorry, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I know you are. I've heard your sincere apologies before, and I don't buy them anymore, so please. I'm not in a good mood with your behaviour today. I have communicated with your leader, I have communicated with the person on her left, and now I'm communicating with you.

Hon. President of Treasury Board, I'm sorry to ask you to do this, but could you start over so that we can hear this answer, because I certainly could not.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government has taken concrete, legislative steps to keep the debt well under control. We have limited borrowing by placing a cap on the debt-servicing costs. The interest paid on the debt cannot exceed 3 per cent of operational revenue. [interjection] The hon. member might want to listen to the answer because it is his critic portfolio.

That means that if the operational revenue drops or if interest rates increase, our borrowing limit will go down, which means we will have to clear off that debt. Again, we set money to the side right off the top, including the debt repayment.

**The Speaker:** Let's move on. Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### International and Intergovernmental Relations Ministry

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that new positions and new titles have popped up within the highest offices of the International and Intergovernmental Relations ministry. Last week I was disappointed the minister could not confirm fair and open competitions on IIR jobs. I know that other ministries have deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers, but it seems a new title has been borrowed from Alberta Energy. To the Associate Minister of IIR: can she please explain to the House why there's a minister, an associate minister, a deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers – plural – and now a chief assistant deputy minister?

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

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We understand why we have a minister and a deputy minister. I was also appointed as associate minister, with a special focus on Asia, and to also chair the Asia Advisory Council as part of our government's plan to open new markets and enhance our presence in important markets. The international strategy is featured prominently in our building Alberta plan, and that's why we now have a chief assistant deputy minister for international.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Ministry of IIR has adopted the Alberta Health Services model of managers managing managers managing yet more managers, does the minister really think that appointing yet another manager, a new chief assistant

deputy minister, is going to help with the image of entitlement and waste that permeates this government?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, what Albertans know and appreciate is that this government works every day to open new markets, to create opportunities for business in Alberta to do business in the world. We are a province that trades out into the world, and that's an exceedingly important part of our economy, our community, and our quality of life. This government strives every day to have the people in place and the structure in place so that we can help Albertans sell their products out to the world, and we do not apologize for doing that.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government claims to have held the line on spending with this budget – yet the truth is that non flood spending rose by 7 per cent – and given that the full-time employee count for core government positions is rising by a thousand positions this fiscal year, is the creation of these new fancy titles in order to flaunt and hide ADMs across the public service? What has the government in mind when it talks about commitment to living within its means?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what that hon. member would know if he had any experience in the real world at all would be that you organize your structure to do your business. [interjections] You don't hire people unless you need them. When you hire them, you put them in the right place, and you pay them the right amount to do the right job. We're trading out into the world, we're creating new markets, we're helping Alberta business do business in the world, and that is very important to Albertans' quality of life. We want to do that, we want to do it right, and we want to do it with the right people.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if you have a point of order to raise, stand up and raise it. We don't need the finger pointing.

Let's go on. Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Medicine Hat.

#### Bonnyville-Cold Lake Infrastructure Funding

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not the first time I've gotten up and asked a question on the CRISP report. The CRISP is a high-level document that has no real substance or actual listed infrastructure for my Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. The CRISP report is supposed to be a long-term strategic plan for population growth and infrastructure needs in the Cold Lake oil sands area. To the Minister of Energy: what concrete actions for my area have taken place as a result of the CRISP report?

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

2:40

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to say thank you to this hon. member for how she represents her constituents. She does an outstanding job making sure every day that everyone in cabinet understands how important her area is to this province, so I want to thank her for that.

Mr. Speaker, it is a high-level document, it is about long-term planning, and it is getting ahead of those issues, so the infrastructure, the transportation needs, all of the social needs of the community. We're working together with Municipal Affairs, with Transportation, and with Infrastructure to prioritize the needs for her area and for her communities.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** My first supplemental question is to the Minister of Transportation. The report identifies twinning and increased lane capacity for highways 28, 55, and 881 to the Bonnyville and Cold Lake areas. When can we expect to see progress on this critical infrastructure in my area?

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been out to this area in her constituency with the member and listened to her community members and her concerns, but I can assure you that my department gets many requests from all communities and municipalities across this province. The task is the balance, balancing the priorities. Balancing and looking at safety is always number one. Market access is also important in prioritizing these projects as well as the budget restrictions and the dollars we have available.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** That may be very good, but we are the second-largest oil sands in the province.

To the same minister. The minister of SRD has just recently identified Cold Lake as the regional water source of my constituency. When can we expect capital funding dollars for this project, that will provide safe drinking water to my entire area?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a potential Water for Life project, but, not unlike the roads, lots of municipalities have needs. They've applied to the Water for Life project, and they're important in all communities. The task that we have is a balance. We've got all these priorities. We've got to prioritize the list and build the ones for the money we have. We've got to look at the needs of the project. We've got to look at the costs and all other priorities. Unfortunately, this project will not be funded in the next budget, but we're always working with municipalities to meet their needs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, we only got through 15 main questions, a total of 90 questions and answers, as a result of too many interjections by you yourselves. Now, it doesn't matter to me whether we get 15 or 20 questions up. I'd like as many as possible, however, to get up. Today you didn't really help yourselves in that regard. Two days ago we had 108 questions and answers, 18 full sets. Let's aspire to something similar to that again tomorrow.

In 30 seconds from now we will resume with Members' Statements, and that would start with Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Red Deer-North.

### Educational Curriculum Redesign

**Ms Kubinec:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent conversation with a retired general who still had school-aged children, he told me one of the biggest reasons that he chose to retire here in Alberta was because of our education system. He talked of having soldiers up for transfer who were nearly in tears because their children were not going to be educated here, in the best system in Canada.

We've heard much criticism in this House of late regarding our curriculum redesign. Everything needs to grow and change to

survive, even scholastics and methods of how we do things. Through the vision of Inspiring Education, our government is committed to preparing students today for a successful future. Our commitment to excellence is why we're redesigning the curriculum to focus on literacy, numeracy, and 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking and problem solving.

We are developing a curriculum that uses the best of both basic skills such as arithmetic and reading and inquiry-based learning, which develops additional skills. Alberta is at the top because we have taken action and grown by investing in our youth and putting the success of children first. At the end of the day we must ask ourselves: are we preparing our children for their future or our past?

A recent article in the *Calgary Herald*, which I will table, by Jim Brandon and Dianne Gereluk outlined necessary points to be considered. In it they make mention of the

need to go beyond the traditional ways of schooling that has focused on rote memory, repetition and worksheets . . . beyond simply teaching students to write to the test with little understanding of the application of these issues in other contexts.

Why wouldn't we want to push the boundaries and set our youth up to excel in every way? Evolution is a natural occurrence, and it happens everywhere. As a government we choose to change with the times and prepare our students for excellence.

Thank you.

### Vision Assessments for Schoolchildren

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, if you removed your glasses, would you struggle to read the notes in front of you? Could you see a blackboard or a whiteboard 20 feet away? If everyone who wears glasses or contact lenses removed them, how good would their literacy be? How hard would they have to struggle to read the newspaper, an e-mail, a magazine, or a book? Imagine if you had to struggle every day without your glasses or contacts? Half of your daily energy would be spent trying to compensate for this. Imagine how difficult it would be if you didn't even know you had a problem with vision.

There are children in school who struggle every day with compensating for poor vision. These children depend on the adults in their lives to make the right decisions. If they had a broken bone or a high fever, their parents would rush them to emergency. But what if there is no raging fever or broken bone, no outward sign of a physical or visual problem? What would be the trigger to encourage a parent to have their child's eyes checked?

We are told to get an annual physical checkup every year for early detection of unseen dysfunction or disease. It is just as important to include a complete visual examination as part of an early prevention program. By sending children to school every day who have not had a complete visual checkup and who may have problems with eyesight, we set them up for failure. Visual impediments that have not been addressed can lead to frustrated children who fidget in their chairs, have behaviour problems, suffer with social problems, and struggle to get good grades.

Dr. Charles Boulet and Dr. Noella Piquette of the University of Lethbridge believe that it is a violation of a child's human rights to not address visual impediments that they may have. My private member's bill, Bill 203, Childhood Vision Assessment Act, requires that every child have a complete eye exam as part of grade 1 registration. This simple step would have profound results for the 25 per cent of children who suffer with visual impediments and don't even know it. Eighty per cent of learning requires good vision. By requiring visual testing as part of the routine to prepare



a child for school, we provide them with a critical and powerful tool for success. Their success is our success. Bill 203 will make a profound difference in a child's life.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta and the aggressive progressives: adapted from a Peggy Noonan column. The mischievous meddling of this out-of-touch PC government is hurting our province. There are few areas where they aren't making it worse. We're suffering from the politicization of too much of our lives. Government is growing in destructive not helpful ways. Fees and rules increase. Common sense says that we're losing a vital part of ourselves through deliberate decisions to move from local to central planning.

Ridiculous rules and regulations abound, from starting a business to feeding people driven from their homes by a threatening prairie fire. It's all part and parcel of the same malady. So is the erosion of the idea that religious scruples and beliefs have a high place that must culturally and politically be respected. On Twitter recently someone asked: can the government compel a Jewish baker to deliver a wedding cake on a Saturday; if not, why not? Why not indeed. Because the truly tolerant give each other a little space.

I think a lot of people right now feel like a guy in a car driving down a street that some bureaucrat just decided should be one way, the oncoming way. He's dodging the vehicles as they speed towards him, but soon there are too many. So he turns around and is going with the flow but not to a destination of his own choosing, and he can't find an exit until 2016.

2:50

That's how people feel about the demands and dictates of the burgeoning bureaucracy. Most voters believe they can make the best decisions for themselves, but the PCs disagree. Imagine that your wages have been frozen, that some co-workers have been laid off. You need a new school. One is announced but without a guaranteed start date, and no local contractors can bid on it.

People are overwhelmed by PC government ineptness. True conservatives feel exhausted from trying to fight back on so many fronts. But the progressives, too, are damaged. They look whipped and incoherent. If they win, they'll win year by year less of a province. We can't let that happen.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark or someone on behalf of.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table 50 of over 4,000 postcards our office has received asking this PC government to restore consistent and reliable funding to postsecondary education in Alberta. The postcards, collected by the Non-Academic Staff Association at the University of Alberta, are clear evidence that the government is not listening to the demands of Albertans for a well-funded postsecondary education system that is both accessible and affordable for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the associate minister.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the leader of the Liberal opposition I have several tablings connected with the question that he asked earlier today. The first is the results of a FOIP requesting correspondence between the office of the Premier and Jaime Watt, who is the executive chairman of Navigator.

The second is the website printout of Navigator Ltd. referencing their staff, which was also in the question, plus a particular biography from that same website on Mr. Watt and a number of other members of that Navigator team that were referenced in the leader's question.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to table the requisite number of copies of a letter between myself and Minister Jason Kenney, the federal MP, and it's dated March 18, 2014. The letter relates to the provincial efforts to purchase the land known as Willow Square in Fort McMurray, and it outlines that we have been very aggressively pursuing that land. In addition, there are two attached letters. One of the letters that's attached to it is a letter from hon. Minister Ric McIver, where he has indicated the province's desire to purchase the land known as Willow Square in Fort McMurray. The second attachment is a letter dated October 28, where I set out several solutions and indicate to Minister Kenney that the province is very eager to acquire that land so that we can fulfill the vision that seniors have had on that facility. I would propose to table that now.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the five requisite copies of the first page of a large petition that was presented to the government of Canada by some of my constituents who are asking for tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. They're requesting that the Criminal Code of Canada be changed to define the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter as well as five other recommendations aimed at toughening these laws. By tabling this today, I'm helping to draw attention to this very serious issue and indicating my support for their efforts.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of a bunch of documents encompassing 6,100 people who have signed a document indicating that they wish and urge the government of Alberta to not move forward to build the seniors' long-term care facility in Parsons Creek but, rather, to immediately consider building it in the downtown Fort McMurray area near the hospital on land currently owned or controlled by the province. I do have the requisite copies. All of these individuals are of voting age. I can tell you that this group is not going away – it's not going away – and the MLAs should start listening to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Point of Order Referring to the Absence of Members

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, to my recollection, we have one formal point of order, which was raised at approximately 2:08 p.m. by the Government House Leader presumably with reference to some comments made by the leader of the ND opposition, which also prompted the Speaker to intervene.

Now, just before we go there, I want to read two citations myself. The first one comes from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009. On page 614, about the middle of the page, it reads the following:

Allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable. Speakers have upheld this prohibition on the ground that “there are many places that Members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office”.

That applies to every single one of us, not just to members of cabinet and not just to opposition but to all of us.

Secondly, in *Beauchesne’s Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, on page 141, subsection 481 reads as follows:

Besides the prohibitions contained in Standing Order 18, it has been sanctioned by usage that a Member, while speaking, must not . . .

(c) refer to the presence or absence of specific Members.

I don’t think that could be any clearer. We have referred to this before.

What I found unacceptable today, from my perspective – never mind what the points of order here are going to be right away, which are on this topic, I’m sure – is that in spite of having been cautioned, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood proceeded to dig yet a deeper hole in this respect. At that point I indicated that I would likely come back to him and offer him a chance, before we take up more valuable time, to comment and, perhaps, if he wishes, to withdraw those comments.

So let me start there. If there is someone who wishes to make that withdrawal on his behalf, I would be very happy to have it and hear it and the sincerity with which it comes, and then we’ll try and move on.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your references. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood does apologize, but . . . [interjections] May I finish?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I’m judging this not only in the words being said but the tone, the manner, and the sincerity with which they are said. Regardless of whether you like what’s being said or not, I want to hear it.

Hon. member, you have the floor. Please continue.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, definitely, the member does apologize.

The only comment that I’ll make in addition to the apology is that we have repeatedly not received any notification of the absence or presence of a member, which we have for other ministers but have not in the case of the one member. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was feeling a little frustrated after daily preparing questions to be directed toward the member on the opposite side, intending or expecting that their presence would be here. I’m being very careful and not referring to the person at the moment. So the comment that I wanted to make was that repeatedly we’ve not been receiving any notification, where we normally do when there is going to be an absence from the front bench, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I listened very carefully to that, and I see that there are some extenuating comments in that withdrawal, which I want to think about for a moment.

I want to recognize the Government House Leader. You had a point here that you wanted to raise in respect to the point I just raised.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, on the point you raised, I think it’s important to understand that any cabinet minister in question period can answer any question that’s being asked. The fact that, you know, they’re saying that somebody is not in the House to me doesn’t carry any weight because any minister on the front bench or in the back can answer a question at any given time, and we’re all prepared to answer those questions, especially as they relate to our own ministries.

Also, the Premier’s schedule is one that is scheduled for her. She’s a very important individual in this House, and she has very important work to do. There are times when she’s not going to be in the House. Sometimes it’s a case of an emergency that she has other business that has to be attended to. Again, as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we all can answer on behalf of the Premier in this House at any given time.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I raise this not with respect to particularly the Premier, who is the subject of the debate at the moment, but with respect to any one of us, any single one of us, and it matters not to me whether it’s a government member, an opposition member, or an independent member. The fact is that we have these rules. Some of them are very old, tried-and-true rules, but they exist for a reason. They exist for the respect of the institution that we all pledged to serve, the institution that we took an oath to help serve, to uphold.

I would ask you again – this is not the first time – to please ensure that you know the rules. You’re in the game; make sure you know the rules. If you don’t, go back and read some of the comments that I’ve made because I’ve commented on many of them which are frequently referred to in this House. Let’s not have any more purposely broken rules.

In the meantime, hon. Government House Leader, you might want to address the comments that Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview made. I don’t know what arrangements you have about responding to requests for who’s available to take questions or not.

It’s very true that any member of the front bench or the bench that is occupied by associate ministers can answer any question at any time on behalf of anyone from cabinet. That is very true. So, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, I’d ask you to keep that in mind as well. This knife cuts both ways.

That having been said, let me remind you that the legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and this evening for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Health in committee room A and Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Treasury Board and Finance in committee room B. This evening Alberta’s Economic Future will consider the estimates of Infrastructure in committee room A.

I neglected to say that that point of order is now concluded, the one just referred to.

The House is adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:02 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

## Table of Contents

Prayers .....	303
Introduction of Visitors .....	303
Introduction of Guests .....	303
Members' Statements	
Long-term Care in Fort McMurray .....	305
Mental Health Services .....	305
Infrastructure Funding .....	305
Educational Curriculum Redesign .....	314
Vision Assessments for Schoolchildren .....	314
Government Policies .....	315
Statement by the Speaker	
Rotation of Questions, Oral Question Period Practices .....	305
Oral Question Period	
Alberta Health Services Administration Costs .....	306
Probation Services for Aboriginal Youth .....	306
Disaster Recovery Program Claims .....	307
Flood Recovery Communications Contract .....	307
Government Effectiveness .....	308
Alberta Future Fund .....	308
Long-term Care in Fort McMurray .....	309
Educational Curriculum Redesign .....	309
Drilling in Urban Areas .....	310
Building Alberta Plan Advertising .....	311, 312
Provincial Debt .....	312
International and Intergovernmental Relations Ministry .....	313
Bonnyville-Cold Lake Infrastructure Funding .....	313
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	315

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