



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 23a

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

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Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
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Fraser, Hon. Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)  
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Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)  
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Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)  
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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

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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
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### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Jeneroux

Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman	Leskiw
Blakeman	Quadri
Brown	Wilson
DeLong	Young
Eggen	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky

Deputy Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

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

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Mr. Xiao

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Leskiw

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

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

Chair: Ms Kubinec

Deputy Chair: Mr. Rogers

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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.

Thursday, April 24, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us pray. As this week of work in the Assembly draws to a close, let us be mindful of the weekend of work that awaits us in our constituencies where we live. May our strength and resolve be fortified in that regard. And on this weekend, that ushers in the National Day of Mourning for injured workers, on April 28, let us pray for those workers who have been killed, injured, or disabled as a result of work-related incidents. Our thoughts are with their friends, their families, loved ones, colleagues, and workers. May all of our workforce return home safely and soundly at the end of each workday. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us begin with school groups. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I have a fantastic school visiting from my constituency, and today we have 45 students from the Ashmont school joining us. They are joined by some excellent teachers and group leaders. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature 66 of the very best grade 6 students and teachers Alberta has to offer. They are here visiting us from the Iron Ridge junior campus in Blackfalds. I would now ask that these students and their teachers Mr. Bill Carter, Ms Jodi Vanderzwaag, Mrs. Cheryl Taylor, Mrs. Rochelle Miller, Miss Raeann McNaught, and Ms Amy Lasher please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there other school groups?

Not yet. Okay. Let us move on then with Edmonton-South West, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very special guests, who are also both Queen's Diamond Jubilee recipients.

My first guest is Shayne Smith. Shayne is visiting our province and attending two schools in south Edmonton as a motivational speaker, bringing the message: there is no limit. Shayne has lived this message. When Shayne was four months old, he contracted a rare form of meningitis, which left him in a coma for 10 days. He then required amputations of both his legs, one hand, and half of each finger on the other hand and was given less than a 2 per cent chance to survive.

Since this he has shown nothing but determination and athletic ability. By the age of three he learned to swim. He learned to ride a horse and received special permission to play on the T-ball team. He also played sledge hockey and wheelchair basketball. Shayne has had several great accomplishments in his basketball career. In

2005 he was drafted as a player for the Canadian junior wheelchair basketball team and played at the world championships in England. In 2011 the team travelled to Japan, where they won gold. Now Shayne travels Canada, speaking to youth about there being no limits in what a person can do.

With Shayne is Daylin Breen, a constituent of Edmonton-South West but also a strong advocate for many community initiatives, for which he was honoured with his Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal. Both are wonderful men, and I would ask them to acknowledge the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a true pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three very important people in my world. I would like to start by introducing my wife, Sally. Many of you have had the opportunity and pleasure of meeting Sally, and for those of you who have, I'm sure you would all agree: definitely the better half.

With Sally is my mother-in-law, Ms Mervat Kharsa. Like every mother-in-law, Mr. Speaker, she is my visiting dignitary. Thank you for allowing her to sit in your gallery today. She immigrated to Canada from Egypt 39 years ago and has had a very successful career as a professional engineer here in Canada. This is her first time experiencing any Westminster system in action. She always puts our family first and is a huge support. Thank you for being here.

Now, with them is my son Jude. Jude has been looking forward to today for a very long time, not just simply because he loves this building and all of you fine people but because today is his fourth birthday. I appreciate your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. We all know how important it is to share birthdays. I thank both of you for taking the time to be here today to allow me to share in it. I would ask them all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a tough act to follow, but it does make the point of how important one's family is. Many of us here, I know, probably spend more time with our staff and co-workers than we do with our family. It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my staff in my office. They work very hard. They are professionals who are committed not only to agriculture but to all Albertans. One of the best things about them is that they make me laugh. They're great people, and they also keep me young. I'll just call their names, ask them to stand, and then we can acknowledge them once they've all stood: my chief of staff, Nick Harsulla, in the members' gallery; my correspondence assistant, Tracy Kully; my scheduler, Brittney Timperley; my press secretary – Julie, stand up – who says that she prefers to be called the agricultural spin doctor rather than a political animal; and my special assistant, Shannon McLaughlin. Colleagues, if you could please acknowledge them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by the leader of the Liberal opposition.

**Mr. Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's truly a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of

this Assembly a wonderful ambassador for the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo as well as a dear friend, Tracy McKinnon. Tracy is the current chair of the Fort McMurray Catholic school board, was the past co-chair of the child and family services authority in Fort McMurray, and she has just recently completed her term with the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council. As you can see, Tracy is a very active member of our community. She is here in Edmonton, along with the Alberta School Boards Association Advocacy Committee, promoting partners in education. I was pleased to attend their MLA reception last night promoting conversations between the Alberta school board zones 2 and 3 and the members of this Assembly. I'd ask that she now rise and receive the warmest welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Kathryn Doyle, a 14-year-old honour student who attends Lorne Akins school in St. Albert. She's here with her mother, Donna Doyle. On May 10 Kathryn will participate in an Olympian distance challenge, where swimmers can see how far they can swim in two hours. The money raised benefits diabetes research in Alberta. Last year she was a top fundraiser, raising over \$1,700 and swimming eight kilometres. This year she wants to raise \$4,000 and swim over nine and a half kilometres. I know she's written some of you, and I encourage all the MLAs to give her their support. In fact, I think she's already sent out a tweet, that I'll retweet out, and I'd encourage every other member to do that as well. I'd ask Kathryn and her mother to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I'd also like to introduce you to Frank Klemen and his assistant Mary Egan. Frank is the president of Support to Individuals at Risk in Everyone's Neighbourhood Society, or SIRENS. SIRENS' mission is to improve the lives of youth at risk and the mentally ill suffering in the Edmonton area. They'll be leading the first-ever aboriginal parade through downtown Edmonton on June 20, 2015. They're always looking for volunteers and support, and I encourage members to check them out. Mary's Facebook page is Mary Egan. Together we can truly make a difference in the lives of people in our community. I'd ask Frank and Mary to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**1:40**

Mr. Speaker, my last one is a very special introduction. Her name is Eva Bereti. Eva grew up in a residential school, where she was treated poorly. Having said that, she got an education, and she taught in the education system for 31 years, 28 of those years in the Catholic school system. She helped found Maskwacis school. She helped found a lunch program for aboriginal children in Catholic schools. She brought children and their parents to the Faculty Club to let them know what it's like to go to university in an education atmosphere. She has worked tirelessly to help improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families. She herself has given birth to four children, has eight grandchildren, and still has a lot more to do. I'd ask Eva to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a constituent of mine, Dixie Dahlstedt from Ashmont. Dixie was

born and raised in Edmonton and attended both the University of Alberta and the University of Manitoba, graduating with an honours degree in architecture. Dixie has worked on many projects familiar to all of us, served as a lecturer at Mount Royal college, and served on the board of Alberta Ballet, all before moving to New York, where she worked at one of the top three architectural firms in New York City before starting her own firm. She is an outstanding Albertan and has recently returned home. I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour for a ministerial statement.

### National Day of Mourning

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an important and very sombre day across our nation. That is April 28th, National Day of Mourning, the day that we remember and honour those lives that were lost or injured on the job. It also serves as a critical reminder to all of us to renew and reaffirm our commitment to improving health and safety in our workplaces. We must work vigilantly to prevent further workplace deaths, injuries, and diseases.

Each day in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, more than 2 million people go to work with the expectation of arriving home healthy and safe at the end of their shift. It brings to me great sadness to say that this isn't always the case. In 2013 188 of our workers did not make it home to their loved ones. The lives of 37 Alberta workers were lost as a result of motor vehicle accidents. An additional 52 Alberta workers never made it home to their families because of preventable work incidents, and a sobering 99 of our workers passed away last year as a result of occupational diseases due to past exposures. I offer my deepest condolences to the families, friends, and co-workers whose lives have been forever changed by these workplace injuries and fatalities.

National Day of Mourning reminds us all that despite these tragic events there is a community of support in our province, across the country, and around the world that can help guide us through this sadness. National Day of Mourning is also an important reminder of why we do what we do, why we must be relentless in our efforts to keep Alberta workplaces healthy and safe. While we pause to reflect on this one day of mourning, April 28, we must every day be vigilant in our effort to protect the living, to ensure that no more fathers, children, or spouses have to endure the pain of learning their loved ones won't be returning home.

There is not one incident, not one set of circumstances under which workplace death, injury, or disease can be dismissed or excused. The province continues to invest in health and safety and creating measures to prevent these unacceptable losses. We have recently graduated our first class of occupational health and safety peace officers, and every year more officers are taking proactive measures. I would like to thank our Minister of Justice for his help in that project.

In addition to our compliance activities we continue to invest directly in our occupational disease and injury prevention program. We fully understand that a majority of our workplace

deaths from occupational disease are from past failures to understand the impacts of minerals, chemicals, and other substances.

On this day of mourning I hope all Albertans will take a moment to think of those who lost their lives on the job. Talk about it at your safety meetings and around the lunchroom table and again at home at the dinner table with your families. We all have a role to play in keeping our workplaces healthy and safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition or someone on behalf of Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for speaking so compassionately in commemorating this day of mourning as we remember those injured and killed on the job. Our deepest sympathies go out to all who remember and mourn on a more personal level.

Those of us sitting here today work in a safe place. An accidental slip of the tongue may embarrass us, but we won't likely need first aid, just a little help getting our foot out of our mouth. However, many jobs do expose people to risks of injury and, sadly, even death. Years of experience, with lessons learned the hard way, have brought us to a point where job risks are being mitigated. Technology, education, and training are playing an important role. In conjunction with trade associations and stakeholder engagement effective safety programs are being developed and implemented. Some younger employees may not be used to following workplace rules and don't realize that safe procedures and practices have evolved over time and often at great cost and in injury to earlier workers. If we don't learn from our mistakes, we're destined to repeat them.

When I teach life skills and employability to trades students, I always emphasize the importance of learning all the rules and procedures and asking questions about any they don't understand or are having trouble learning. "Lloyd can't hitchhike anymore," I say to get their attention. When they ask what I mean, I explain that Lloyd had been taught and was clear on a procedure for safely removing the steel guide pins on the sides of the live roll at the back of an oil field trailer or bed truck. The swamper, a truck driver's helper, has to grasp the three- to four-centimetre pin with just the tip of his thumb and finger. That's so that if the load slips or slides while it's being winched on, he won't get hurt. Being in a hurry one day, Lloyd grabbed the pin with his thumb wrapped all the way around it just a moment before the load slid. It pinched his thumb, severing it. Preventable? Of course. Properly trained and aware of the risks? He was. So how did it happen? In a moment of haste Lloyd thought he'd be okay just this once. He wasn't.

We need constant vigilance, regular review, remedial training, watching out for each other, timely feedback, getting in the habit of always doing it right the first time, the safe way. We now have new OH and S inspectors, that were referred to, trained to enforce safety rules on the job sites – they need to – in a consistent and timely manner. Safety is everyone's responsibility. There must never be situations where pressure is allowed to compromise proven procedures for the sake of expediency. "Just this once" should never be uttered or allowed or even thought.

Workers and their families are depending on us as legislators to do our part to ensure all job sites are safe. I know it's the fondest wish of all of us here that Alberta workers will return home safely at the end of each day.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, unanimous consent is likely to be asked for by Edmonton-Centre. Please proceed.

**Ms Blakeman:** Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues in the Assembly if they would be willing to grant unanimous consent to the leaders of the third party and the fourth party or their representatives to be able to respond to the minister's statement.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** As you know, by the rules, hon. members, unanimous consent is required for others to participate. We have at least three requests at this stage from three separate entities. I'll ask one question. Does anybody object to granting unanimous consent for these other representatives to join in this discussion? If you do, please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Let us proceed with the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

1:50

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All workplace deaths are preventable. They arise from unsafe working conditions, lack of training, unsafe choices. Workplace deaths are a tragedy individually, in a family, and in a community. Alberta had 110 occupational deaths in 2007, roughly 9 deaths per 100,000 worker-year population. Last year there were 173 deaths on the job. The workplace fatality rate has declined in the last few years, according to WCB, but Alberta and B.C. still have among the highest in Canada, excluding the Northwest Territories. Alberta employs only 1.4 health and safety inspectors per 10,000 workers. The national average is 2 per 10,000 workers. Occupational health and safety prosecutions, already among the lowest in Canada, dropped to only a few last year despite 173 deaths on the job. Farm workers in Alberta died at a higher rate, 10 per 100,000, averaging 18 farm deaths per year over the last 20 years. Unacceptable, preventable tragedies.

It must be mentioned that this includes 25 major injuries per death at a huge health care cost, not borne by these corporations but by our public health system, according to the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research.

Deaths and disabling injuries among farm workers are particularly common and troubling in light of this government's deliberate exclusion of paid farm workers, even on the large factory farms – beef, chicken, hog, and dairy – from any oversight. It's shocking to most Alberta consumers to learn that the very people that provide our daily bread, potatoes, corn, and beef do not have the protection of occupational health and safety or workers' compensation. After a decade of denial and referral to committees this government refuses to give farm workers, including children, the right to and the benefit of what every other worker enjoys in the workplace in the 21st century: standard workplace protection, timely inspection, and diligent investigation of deaths or injuries.

Loss of life due to preventable work-related injury is a most fundamental responsibility for modern government. Only the first step is to ensure a well-educated workforce. Laws are essential where lives are at stake, including legislated standards and enforcement of those standards. Albertans, including children, deserve a higher level of investment in prevention in workplaces today.

This National Day of Mourning must be matched by action and investment in the evidence that leads to safer workplaces and safe workers. We can and we must do better on this recurring theme of neglect in Alberta today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to acknowledge the families and loved ones of those Albertans who have lost their lives this year, in particular the most recent Albertan to have lost his life at work, Shane Daye, who passed away this week. My condolences and those of my caucus go out to his family and to all families of workers who have died or been seriously injured on the job.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to suggest that in Alberta the government's failure to protect workers from injury and death in the workplace has been tragically inadequate for years. Alberta has the worst occupational health and safety laws in the country. New rules that would allow occupational health and safety officers to issue tickets haven't resulted in a single fine. We have ridiculously low maximum penalties in Alberta for employers who put their workers at risk, and we're barely enforcing those. Just this month we learned that the number of safety breaches that the Crown prosecutes has dropped dramatically this year, with no adequate explanation. Finally, this PC government refuses to extend occupational health and safety protection to farm workers, resulting in hundreds of needless deaths and serious injuries.

Now, Mr. Speaker, where workers can't count on the government to help them keep safe, one would hope that the tools would be there for them to do that themselves. Unfortunately, Alberta is still the only province in the country which refuses to mandate joint worker-employer work-site health and safety committees. This mechanism works throughout the country to bring down workplace injuries but not here in Alberta because this government won't let it.

This year in particular, Mr. Speaker, the government's failure to work in good faith with its own unions' health and safety representatives resulted in correctional officers at the Remand Centre going on a wildcat strike over unsafe working conditions. The government's response: firing workers and bringing in the most antidemocratic legislation this province has seen in decades.

Mr. Speaker, if we are truly going to recognize the Albertans killed and injured at work, we owe it to them to do our job as legislators. That means extending occupational health and safety protection to farm workers, ensuring that we have enough officials to enforce workplace safety laws, providing a vehicle for workers to keep themselves safe, and listening to the concerns of those working people when they raise them. That and only that is how we honour the memories of the many workers who have been killed or seriously injured at work in the past year.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. minister for his comments today on the upcoming day of mourning. With about 55 per cent of the citizens of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo being either directly or indirectly involved in the oil sands industry, our residents do have a strong focus on safety, both on the job site and in their everyday lives, yet accidents still occur.

In fact, this past Sunday our community received the devastating news that it had lost a loved one in a tragic workplace accident, Mr. Shane Daye. As with other accidents and deaths that occur in my area, we make a concerted effort to contact the companies and try and establish what can be done for the families as well as to prevent future incidents. I did take the opportunity to speak with a Suncor representative, and the company has been deeply troubled by this horrible event. Suncor espouses a strong culture of employee safety with their journey to zero policy. They

express that workplace injuries are completely unacceptable, and they're doing everything in their ability to find out why this accident happened in order to prevent future injuries. I offer my sincerest condolences to the family as well as to our greater community for this shocking loss.

Mr. Speaker, we're all strongly impacted by this and other events, and on April 28, the day of mourning, we are reminded that everybody needs to be vigilant regarding safety in the workplace. It is imperative that everyone – workers, family members, industry, and government – recognize that we all have a role to play in protecting workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there others?

If not, I beg your indulgence to allow me to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests to recognize a group of students who have travelled a long way to be here and have an equally long trip back to make it there before dark. Does anyone object to reverting to a brief intro?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake, please.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, and thank you to the Assembly. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 26 fabulous students from my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The school is St. Dominic in Cold Lake. It's a pleasure that they're here today. Their teacher is Mr. Benoit Côté, who happens to be the hon. Member from Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley's son-in-law. I would ask all the students from St. Dom and the parents and the teachers to stand up – you can rise – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Very briefly, the hon. Associate Minister – International and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Mr. Wei Liu, program administrator with University of Alberta International, which supports the global academic leadership development program. This exciting program, sponsored by the China Scholarship Council, selects administrators from universities across China to study at the U of A for three months and exposes them to Canadian university administration practices. Ninety university administrators from 35 universities have participated in this program since 2012. The scholarship council actually said that the U of A received the highest number of these participants in the world. We're joined today by Mr. Wei, who is also joined by Mr. Xiaobing Lin, interpreter and PhD student at the U of A. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd like to ask these two members to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

2:00

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, I have one more introduction to make. Joining us today are also 38 senior administrators from a wide range of faculties such as medicine, economics, engineering, cultural studies, and resources and environment representing 21 universities across China. They're here, actually, to develop crosscultural understanding of education and to foster innovative



new capacities. I'm going to ask you to stand as I mention the university: Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University; University of Electronic Science and Technology of China; Southwest Jiaotong University; Ocean University of China; Southeast University; Sichuan University; Central China Normal University; Shaanxi Normal University; Shanghai International Studies University; Anhui Agricultural University; Liaoning University; Zhejiang University; Central China Normal University; Lanzhou University, science and engineering; Guangxi University; Beijing University; Hunan University of Science and Technology; Harbin Normal University; Jilin University; Changchun University of Science and Technology; and No. 3 Military Medical University. Please give them the warm welcome of the House.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Let's jump straight in, please, starting with the official Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Provincial Budget Documents

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we have several of this government's former Finance ministers condemning the budget that was passed yesterday. Now the Auditor General has joined them. Yesterday he told the Public Accounts Committee, "It would be best for Albertans to have a budget presented before the start of the year, in the same way that the actual results will be presented." He made it clear that the budget currently does not follow basic accounting rules and that it should. Will the Premier order the Finance minister to take the advice of the Auditor General?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that isn't exactly what the Auditor General said yesterday. It's unfortunate that the opposition wants to put it in that context.

I want to be very clear that the Alberta government's financial statements follow public-sector accounting principles, and the consolidated surplus-deficit calculation that we do is the same consolidated surplus-deficit calculation the federal government uses and most other jurisdictions that follow public-sector accounting rules and principles.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of whether we use the consolidated constructed system, which the Auditor General likes, which is what we're building for the end of the year anyway, the numbers stay the same.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it was exactly what the Auditor General said. That's why I quoted it.

Also yesterday the assistant deputy minister of Finance stated this. "The budget is a policy choice of government. A government of the day could choose to move to a budget that's based on a financial statements basis at some point in the future. That has not been the choice of [this] government." His point was clear. This government intentionally adopted this deceptive budget presentation. The Auditor General thinks the time wasted on interpreting the budget would be better spent on debating the government's fiscal policy. Why won't the government take the advice of the Auditor General?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, actually, I do agree with the Auditor General's assertion that this time that we're spending debating the format of what is a policy document does take away from the time that we could be spending talking about fiscal discipline and the fact that we are building Alberta. We're using the resources at hand to do exactly what Albertans have asked us to do. We are saving for the

future, Mr. Speaker, we are building for tomorrow, and we are making sure that we are living in a fiscally responsible province, with the strongest balance sheet, according to Standard & Poor's, the credit-rating agency, of any jurisdiction in the country.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was blunt on this topic. The Finance minister would do well to read the *Hansard* on it. He was comfortable enough to go on the record and make his viewpoint known. This government isn't fooling him, and they certainly aren't fooling Albertans. Albertans know that they are running a multibillion dollar consolidated cash deficit and that by the time of the next election we will have \$21 billion worth of debt. Why won't this government come clean with Albertans?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, you know, I would really appreciate it if the hon. Leader of the Opposition would come clean as well in the sense that she's talking about consolidated financial statements not in the way the public-sector accounting principles would apply but in the way that she would do her chequebook, Mr. Speaker. That's not the way \$40 billion corporations manage themselves. It's not the way that the federal government manage themselves. To follow that logic, the federal government doesn't have a \$2.9 billion deficit. They've got a hundred billion dollar deficit. I'm sure the Prime Minister would be pleased to understand that the Wildrose believes that they are lying about their financial situation, too.

**The Speaker:** Second main set of questions.

### FOIP Request Process

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General isn't the only independent officer this government is ignoring. They're also refusing to take the Information Commissioner's advice while shamelessly claiming that she endorses their political interference in the freedom of information process. As the CBC reported yesterday, PC political staff were involved in delaying the release of FOIP requests. Can the Premier please explain how the Health minister's press secretary could legitimately know in December that a FOIP document was going to be released in February?

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise. As I've said previously, this government is delivering unprecedented transparency in Alberta. We're doing that not only through the gold standard expense disclosure policy and the gold standard salary disclosure policy; we are also doing a review of the FOIP Act.

Now, with respect to the issue that was raised by the hon. member, I understand a letter has been sent to the Privacy Commissioner, and that's the appropriate forum for that to be reviewed.

**Ms Smith:** I'll try again, Mr. Speaker. The CBC report clearly shows that the Health minister's communications staff was strategizing a political response to an embarrassing freedom of information request almost two months before it would be released. They also show that the minister's staff was made aware of who asked for it, a clear violation of the privacy laws. To the Premier: how can Albertans trust the information that comes out when his government's political operatives are intercepting it before it goes public?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to the FOIP legislation – I hope the members across the way read it – it says that the head of the public body, which would be the minister in this case, has the authority for releasing the FOIP request. The head of the public body, in this case the minister, has the ability to delegate that authority to somebody else but has ultimate responsibility to review the material. There's also in the FOIP legislation the requirement that the third party whose information is going to be released be consulted, which is why Health had the opportunity to review it, and the minister delegated somebody to check it.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we were told that they should only review it five days in advance – this was two months in advance – and you're not supposed to know who requested the information. Both are in clear violation.

This government refuses to uphold basic tenets of transparency. Their interference in the freedom of information process just goes to show that there is no line too far for them to cross if it means protecting their political interests and saving their scandal-plagued party from further embarrassment. To the Premier. This is the legacy of the party that he's going to hand over to his new leader in September. What is he going to do to correct it?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, time and time again we have heard the members talk about vetting and about reviewing and about interfering, yet all we've seen so far is a minister who had the authority under the legislation to review what material was going to be released, which is, quite frankly, his obligation in the protection of people's privacy as well. It's his obligation to do so. That's all that happened. If they ever could demonstrate where any interference came, besides looking at the material to make sure that Albertans were protected, I'd like to see them table it.

**The Speaker:** Third and final main set of questions.

**Ms Smith:** Happy to, Minister.

Yesterday I was asked why an everyday Albertan should care about the government interfering in the freedom of information process. Well, let me tell you why. Several months ago the Alberta Federation of Labour put in a FOIP request for the government's calculations to justify their pension changes. The Finance department promised the information by March 10. That information is now 43 days late. In the next few days we are all expected to make decisions on this topic while the government is suppressing this information. To the Finance minister: what is going on in his department?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, it specifically lays out why requests can take longer than 30 days in the legislation under section 14. Some of those are when large volumes of data are being requested, when they have to be specially reviewed by a third party.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for everyone to understand that FOIP requests just in the last two years from elected officials, particularly across the way, have increased by almost 500 per cent. Our FOIP individuals who are working on this do it as quickly as they can, as efficiently, as effectively as possible, but given the volume of requests sometimes they do have to ask for extensions.

2:10

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Federation of Labour paid the \$6,200 fee for the information, and they still aren't getting it. There's really only one conclusion as to why the government

doesn't want this information out. They based their entire argument about the planned pension changes on the premise that the plans are unsustainable. What if that isn't true and these documents prove it? To the Finance minister: doesn't he realize that by delaying the release of this information, it makes it look like he's got something to hide?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, at Public Accounts the other day the chair of Public Accounts, the hon. Member for Airdrie, heard the officials in my department talk about some thousand scenarios that they have run based on the different scenarios that you can operate with: the mortality rates, the discount rates, the contributions, all of those sorts of things. My understanding is that they are actively working on providing that information. But as the hon. Minister of Service Alberta has rightly pointed out, this is a fairly significant amount of data that we are putting together to ensure that the competitive . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Smith:** A simple solution, then, Mr. Speaker: slow the legislation down until you can table the reports.

It comes down to this, Mr. Speaker. The freedom of information process exists to prevent the government from suppressing and hiding damaging information about their mistakes. The process must work free of political interference, but in the last two days alone we've seen several examples that it doesn't. The AFL, the opposition parties, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation have all had their freedom requests interfered with. The credibility and the integrity of government information is at stake. What will the Premier do about it?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I pointed out before, a near 500 per cent increase in the volume of FOIP requests from elected officials across the way has really got everyone bogged down trying to meet all the requests. That's what the delays are caused by.

If we want to talk about transparency, I would challenge the members across the way, if they're so embracing transparency, to release to the public on a website all of the requests they've made, all of the money they've asked to be waived so that taxpayers pay for their FOIP requests, what types of requests they've made, and let Albertans see that some members have requested very frivolous, expensive FOIP requests that waste time.

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

### Bitumen Extraction Resumption Approval

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. An oil company has had repeated leaks of bitumen over a period of time from wells in the same area. All sites continue to leak uncontrolled every day, some contaminating groundwater. They don't know what is causing it, and neither does Alberta Environment. They don't know how to stop it, and neither does Alberta Environment. So let me get this straight. The Alberta regulator has allowed this company to restart, using the same process in the same place but a little further away and with a little less pressure. To the minister of the environment: why is the minister letting the department stand by while this company is allowed to perpetrate this insanity all over again?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This would fall under the Alberta Energy Regulator. If the company has met the requirements of the Alberta Energy Regulator, they can continue to do business.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much. Back to the same minister. Now, the company says that the problem is faulty well bores. Scientists say that there is a change in the geological formation and that as far back as 2001 more than 250 wells failed in that area due to geological shear stress generated by steaming operations, yet the government is going to allow the same company to continue steam pressure. Why won't the minister stop this resumption until the research is in and subject to peer and public review?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Energy Regulator's approval to resume steaming operations at the Primrose site has strings attached to it. These operations must be at least one kilometre from the restricted area and use lower injection volumes and have improved monitoring protocols. There are rules in place for this to happen.

**Ms Blakeman:** Oh, my. Well, the latest reports show this particular company had 33 high-risk enforcements, of which 12 are for persistent noncompliance, in just 18 months, but very few fines or noncompliance fees have been allocated, so I'd say that it was a pretty high-risk group to be allowing to reopen wells in an area that seems prone to leaks. Once again, what is the minister's tolerance threshold for noncompliance? For everyone else in the world it's three strikes and you're out.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have taken our jobs very seriously when dealing with the company that the hon. member across the way is talking about. We have filed charges under the environmental protection act against this company. If they meet the requirements and they continue to do the work that has to be done in a responsible manner, we'll continue to let them operate.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by Calgary-Foothills.

#### Public Service Pension Plan Amendment Bill

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Conservative government's attacks on the pensions of Albertans are being pushed through without adequate consultation. The advice of pension boards, who are responsible for administering the pension plans, has been more or less ignored. In short, this government is riding roughshod over public employees, retirees, and experts alike. My question is to the Finance minister. Why don't you pause, consult with Albertans properly, and reconsider your present course of action?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, this sounds strangely like a motion that was introduced in the House last night on Bill 9, which we spoke

to and on which I actually adjourned the debate last night. We have taken stock of what all of the pension boards have told us around the sustainability issue that they have. We've also listened to experts in the field, including the Auditor General and others from other jurisdictions, who have told us in no uncertain terms that to do nothing is the wrong thing to do, that we need to do something to ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of those pensions.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, do something, do anything, but why don't you talk to Albertans and give Albertans a voice in the decision before you make that decision. It's clear that opposition to Bill 9 is strong and widespread. Many expert voices have challenged the government's rationale for these changes. To the Finance minister: why won't you support the NDP efforts to refer Bill 9 to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future so MLAs can hear from experts and the public alike before voting on the bill?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I did speak to this last night, and I would encourage folks to read *Hansard* and my comments to that at about 11:05 last night. I would also say that there has been across the globe numerous experts talking about defined benefit pension plans. Eighty per cent of Albertans do not have a defined benefit plan, and as I said last night, that's a concern for this government. That's a concern for many governments in North America. That's why this government introduced pooled registered pension plans. That's why this government wants to talk about CPP with the federal government . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Final supplemental.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Well, the minister forgets to mention that a previous Minister of Finance put an end to previous attempts to bring about pension reform for all Canadians. This government is complicit in that decision. It may have changed its mind now, but the fact of the matter is that this government derailed plans for adequate pensions for all Albertans. Albertans are trying to speak up on this issue, Mr. Minister, and the government is deaf. Why won't you withdraw Bill 9, consult with Albertans, and let your next leader decide the course of action for your party?

**Mr. Horner:** It's rather interesting, Mr. Speaker. This party says that I should listen to previous Finance ministers, and that party says that I shouldn't listen to previous Finance ministers. How about we listen to this Finance minister? One, we are concerned about all Albertans' retirement, and we are encouraging ways for Albertans to save for their retirement. Two, what we are doing for those employees of government, not for all Albertans because it doesn't apply to all Albertans, is protecting defined benefit pensions for the future, the past, and the present.

#### Emergency Turnarounds on Highways

**Mr. Webber:** Mr. Speaker, emergency professionals from across the province have expressed an issue concerning the lack of emergency turnarounds on our Alberta highways. I've been told that due to inefficient turnarounds on Alberta's highways and freeways emergency vehicles are often forced to make these direction changes on bridges and overpasses rather than on the roadway itself, and this has become a safety concern. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the current standard used in the design and construction of Alberta's roadways for emergency

vehicles, and what would be the cost to increase these access points on existing roadways?

**2:20**

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty detailed question to answer in 30 seconds, but I'll give it a try. Emergency vehicles should always turn around under safe conditions. There are all kinds of different options for turning around. We do have crossroads in certain areas, but we can't put a turnaround every kilometre on our highways. It would just be way too expensive. Also, those intersections cause more accidents. If the member would like, he could come to my office, and I could give him a more detailed explanation.

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Minister. I'll do that.

To the same minister: given that the government is utilizing P3s for their new road construction, can you advise if there is a different standard used by these contractors than would be recommended by traffic standards Canada?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if I follow that one. The only P3s we're building in road construction are the ring roads, and the design and standards are the same standards and design we use to build all of our roads in this province. I'm not sure what he's talking about.

**Mr. Webber:** To the same minister: given that several Alberta emergency services have indicated an inability to shorten their response times due to this issue, what is your department willing to do to change the existing roads?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, again I'm having trouble following that. We do have our standard intersections and off-ramps on these ring roads. Like I said, we can't put more intersections on our freeways because that creates another safety hazard that's probably far worse than the one the member is talking about.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### **FOIP Request Process** (continued)

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On August 9, 2012, the Wildrose submitted a FOIP request to AHS for the expenses of former health executives. These should have been returned within a few months, but instead AHS took at least six separate extensions. Six months later they were only partially released. Meanwhile political staff in the minister's office had full access to the records. The minister himself was briefed. He knew not only the contents of the FOIP but also who was requesting the records two full months before the records were made public. To the Minister of Health: were your political staff at all involved in requesting or ensuring the numerous extensions in releasing this information?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, under FOIP section 14(1) it says, "The head of a public body," meaning the minister or his designate, "may extend the time for responding to a request for up to 30 days . . . with the Commissioner's permission" for a list of extenuating circumstances like the applicant doesn't give enough detail, there isn't enough time, or it's a complex issue. These requests were granted with the permission of the commissioner. I don't see what the issue is here.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Minister, there's an issue.

Given that records show that on at least three different occasions our FOIP requests identified the applicant either as an opposition party, an elected official, or a political source and given that at least on one of these occasions information was unnecessarily withheld by someone within Alberta Health, how can the minister expect anyone to believe that his office has not politicized the freedom of information process?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, the FOIP Act is very clear. FOIP requests cannot be politicized. Ministers have the responsibility to fulfill the requests for FOIP. They have the personal responsibility as the minister or they can delegate and designate someone else. The requests have been fulfilled. There's no other issue here.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** All right. Let's try this one. For the last three years we have requested and have received the AHS capital submission outlining their infrastructure needs and, more importantly, the risk of not approving these projects, yet when we made the exact same request this year, for the first time ever – ever – the risks of the nonapproval messaging was completely removed. To the minister of accountability: do ministers routinely withhold information for no other reason than being embarrassed by your government?

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said, Alberta has an excellent record of responding to FOIP requests. Of the 4,200 FOIP requests in the last fiscal year, 90 per cent were responded to within 30 days, and 96 per cent were responded to within 60 days. We're conducting a review of the act to make it even better, and that work is ongoing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### **Public Safety in Bonnyville-Cold Lake**

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal officials in my constituency have been contacting me about the reduction of RCMP officers in their communities. As many of you know, the Bonnyville-Cold Lake area is booming, with more people living in our communities, more people on our roads, and, unfortunately, more crime. To the Minister of Justice: why are policing levels being reduced in communities that I represent?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I'm pleased to get that question from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I can advise her that actually no RCMP positions have been reduced in her area. In fact, earlier this year we announced that we would be increasing the number of RCMP officers by 40. That's an investment of \$5.9 million. Of course, that will be decided by the RCMP commanding officers in Edmonton. If this member would like me to connect her with the RCMP, as they do operate independently, I would be happy to do so. It's part of our common-sense, conservative justice policies.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** I'm pleased to hear that, Minister, and you can count on me connecting with you on that.

Given that communities in my constituency are growing and that we see more dangerous driving on our highways with people speeding, texting, and drinking and driving, when are you going to get tough on these offences?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think each of the offences that she mentions is serious. I want to remind all members of this Assembly and anybody who happens to be watching that we have brought in stronger drunk-driving legislation, stronger distracted-driving legislation, which we are reviewing. As well, we also passed Motion 504 I believe it was last week for higher fines on traffic violations. I think we should look at that, but I do think that seizing vehicles for excessive speed is going too far.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you. My second supplementary question is to the Minister of Transportation. Do you have data to suggest that these new laws are making an impact?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Indeed they are, Mr. Speaker. In the year and a half since Alberta's distracted-driving legislation came into force, almost 50,000 people were convicted of distracted driving. Awareness of this legislation is high. A 2012 survey observed that fewer drivers are using cellphones while behind the wheel, a drop from 11.7 per cent in 2007 to 1.4 per cent in 2012. In the first six months of tougher sanctions on impaired drivers we saw a 46 per cent decrease in the number of alcohol-related fatalities compared to the five-year average.

#### **FOIP Request Process** (continued)

**Mrs. Towle:** Serious concerns have been raised regarding the integrity of the freedom of information process and political interference by this government. The associate minister of transparency has shown that he does not understand his own portfolio. He remains confused on FOIP legislation and has clearly not read section 40 of the FOIP Act. Does the minister not understand section 40 of the FOIP Act, which clearly states that the actions of the former Deputy Premier are not in compliance with this legislation?

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

**Mr. Scott:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. As I said, there are remedies under the act if somebody has a concern about the act. That includes sections 53 and 65. I understand that steps have been taken in that regard.

One point that I do want to make about the FOIP Act, that I think is important for the opposition to understand, is that it does cost money to react to a FOIP request. In the last year the government of Alberta spent about \$9.5 million responding to 4,200 access requests. Of the \$9.5 million, after fee waivers only about \$100,000 was recovered by the government of Alberta. It's important to make sure that we have the right balance, Mr. Speaker, between access and protecting privacy.

**Mrs. Towle:** Goldy, this is embarrassing.

Given that this associate minister doesn't even know his own FOIP legislation and given that there is less transparency and more political interference than ever, Mr. Speaker, the government is going into debt paying for a gold-standard, do-nothing ministry. Will this associate minister step down, dissolve his ministry, and be the first member of this PC government to actually save taxpayers some money?

2:30

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, I have personally witnessed the minister of transparency work very diligently on many pieces of

legislation like salary disclosure. He has spent over a year working on consultations on the FOIP review to make sure that the act continues to improve and remains the gold standard across the country. I will continue to support this minister and the work that he does for the benefit of Albertans, from one end of this province to the other.

**Mrs. Towle:** Mr. Speaker, everyone knows this was a made-up ministry.

Given that \$260,000 could be used – here's a thought – buying dialysis machines for everyday Albertans so they don't have to travel for treatment, will this minister admit that he does nothing of value; step down; and stop wasting taxpayer dollars on himself, extra political staffers, car allowances, and all the other fun stuff that comes with his do-nothing ministry?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy from the Wildrose opposition astounds me every single day. First, they say that we're not protecting people's privacy and releasing information enough, and then they say that the entire ministry is frivolous. Well, protecting privacy and releasing information are critically important. I wonder, with millions of dollars spent on FOIP requests and given the fact that we have almost a 500 per cent increase in FOIP requests coming from those opposition members, which wastes people's energy, how many dialysis machines their wild goose chases could have paid for.

#### **Childhood Immunization**

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, in the third quarter AHS reported that in southern Alberta 22 per cent of children were not vaccinated for measles, mumps, and rubella and that 42 per cent were not vaccinated against tetanus, whooping cough, and polio. Jurisdictions such as Ontario, New Brunswick, and Manitoba all require students to be vaccinated before they attend school. All 50 states require the same. To the Associate Minister of Wellness: will Alberta have children that attend our schools have their shots to protect themselves and our society from these life-threatening diseases?

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. This is obviously a very, very important issue, especially for those whose families are dealing with this right now. He may or may not know that we have 20 confirmed cases in Alberta: eight in Calgary, seven in central, and five in Edmonton. Directly related to the question, there's a new case of measles here in town, including an infant under 12 months old, and I just want to point this out. This highlights the importance of immunization as a means of protecting vulnerable Albertans, and I encourage all Albertans to go to Health Link for more information and to get immunized.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, that answer and \$1.64 gets me a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons, Mr. Speaker.

To the same minister. Many schools in this province do not even allow peanuts in their schools due to the deadly consequences that could arise. Well, the same can be true if a child has not been vaccinated. If a parent cannot send a child to school with a peanut, why can they send a kid that has not been vaccinated to school, potentially causing an outbreak and a risk to public health?

**Mr. Rodney:** As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, under the Public Health Act students and staff at schools or child care facilities who have been exposed to measles and are susceptible to measles are required to stay home. They are required to stay home for a period of five days after first exposure through 21 days after the last exposure to measles. I can give you more in the next answer.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, that's fabulous. The minister is doing something after the fact. What I'm asking him is to do something, be proactive to protect our society.

Given that Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and all 50 states require vaccinations for kids to attend school, will this government follow the lead of these jurisdictions, who have implemented policies that have science, common sense, and reason behind them, to protect kids and protect our society?

**Mr. Rodney:** Everything that we do in health and wellness is science based and evidence based. We normally carry about 15,000 doses of MMR vaccine as a three-month supply, but we've ramped it up and currently have about 90,000 doses. Please visit pharmacists and doctors and others to check into this. It's widely accessible. The current routine childhood program includes two doses of MMR at 12 months and at kindergarten ages. An additional 3,000 Albertans were immunized with the MMR vaccine in January and February of this year alone.

### Women's Issues

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday a national research report confirmed what many women in this province already know. Based on measures of health, pay, leadership, and education for women Calgary and Edmonton ranked third-last and last across the country. Women in these cities earned between \$17,000 and \$21,000 a year less than men. To the minister responsible for the status of women in Alberta – oh, right; we're the only province without one. To the jobs minister: why does your PC government do nothing while women's equality in Alberta lags further and further behind?

**Ms Jansen:** I'd like to thank the member for this question and perhaps point out the fact, Mr. Speaker, that I have women's issues in my portfolio. I'm not sure if you knew that. One of the things I think is important to mention is that preliminary work has been undertaken by this government in developing a women's equality and advancement framework. I'm not sure if you know about that, but we had made the announcement, and it's certainly out there. I would be delighted to give you all of the details.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, that's fabulous, Mr. Speaker. I wonder how quickly that's closing the income gap.

Given that now we're fighting to keep Alberta pensions safe from this PC government and given that women make up 70 per cent of public pension plan members, will the Minister of Finance admit that his attacks on pensions are only going to roll back gender equality in this province further and further?

**Mr. Horner:** Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what this Finance minister will tell the hon. member is that what we are doing is protecting the future incomes of those women and men who are working in the public sector for the government of Alberta or in municipalities. If you do nothing, like other jurisdictions, New Brunswick and PEI, in the years past, then you will be facing a situation in the future where those individuals may actually see their pension promise reduced. That's exactly what we are trying to avoid by taking action today. That's leadership.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A reduction of benefits is a decrease in pay there, Mr. Minister.

Given that addressing gender inequality isn't just about encouraging words or celebrating a day and given that this government has failed to deliver on things like full-day kindergarten and child care, that would remove barriers to full-time employment for women, back to the minister of jobs and employment: why hasn't your government done anything to reduce barriers to full-time employment for women?

**Ms Jansen:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. You know, we have vital work that we need to do in this province. This government has recognized that we need to do that work. The women's equality and advancement framework proposes focused actions against a number of themes: violence against women and girls, women's economic security and prosperity, women's leadership in the democratic process, women's health and well-being, and women's legal and educational rights. We're working on that now. It is a priority for us, and we are delighted to be able to do this.

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

### North West Upgrader Project

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that, like most governments, this out-of-touch PC one is no better at picking corporate winners than any of the others. Can you say world-class magnesium plant? Currently we have high hopes that the North West upgrader will be a home run, but we know its costs are spiralling. Originally budgeted at \$5.7 billion, revised in December 2013 by over 50 per cent to \$8.5 billion, it's behind schedule and over budget. Could the minister please advise us how much in total the government is on the hook for?

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

2:40

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission they have entered into a commercial agreement with, I believe, CNRL and North West Upgrading. The first original terms of that, I believe, were around \$350 million, which APMC is financing with CNRL and North West Upgrading. The important piece here is that this is an upgrader that will produce diesel in the province of Alberta. As the hon. member knows, in his jurisdiction there are times when we're short diesel in this province. I think this is a very valuable investment by the people of Alberta and partners . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Bikman:** No disagreement on the need for more diesel fuel, Mr. Minister.

Given that significant Alberta taxpayer resources have been committed to this project, would the minister tell us what requirements there are that specify that Alberta suppliers will be used wherever and whenever practical?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of ensuring that Alberta taxpayers get the best value, we are not going to place conditions on the construction that may not allow that to happen. I am certain that there are a number of suppliers and manufacturers in our province who are sharpening their pencils because of a very

large, very important project happening right in our province. Certainly, we encourage local, and we want to see local, but we are a market-based economy, and we're a market-based government. I'm sure the hon. members opposite would agree.

**Mr. Bikman:** Given that Alberta has world-class steel fabricators, as you've mentioned, doing outstanding work, will the minister tell us why components easily built by manufacturers here in total cost-effectiveness have been outsourced to offshore companies, given that some components reportedly had to be reworked once they got here because things like pressure-weld quality was substandard?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think government should be involved in the day-to-day business decisions of a corporation, nor do I think that the Wildrose – oh, no. I forgot. They no longer have ideology as of last night.

**An Hon. Member:** It's not what it's cracked up to be.

**Mr. Horner:** It's not what it's cracked up to be. That's what it was.

Mr. Speaker, we don't get involved in the day-to-day details of the bid process of a private corporation. We're watching our investment. We're making sure that that investment is secure through the financial management of that corporation. Obviously, if there is some good value to be had, I'm sure the corporation is going to go after that value.

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

### Victims of Crime

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government recently introduced a Victims Bill of Rights that seeks to transform the criminal justice system by creating at the federal level clear rights for victims of crime. This is good news for crime victims across the province but raises the question as to what Alberta is doing in this respect. My question is to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. Can you assure my constituents of Edmonton-Mill Woods and all Albertans that this government will protect the victims of crime in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for that question. I want to assure this member and all members of this House that Alberta Justice always has the goal of putting victims first. I was very happy to see the federal government table this new Victims Bill of Rights on April 3, 2014. The rights of victims are at the forefront whenever we want to be dealing with any matters to do with the criminal justice system. To put it on the record, Alberta Justice supports the federal Victims Bill of Rights. I'm looking forward to working with the federal minister to implement this and see how we can improve the rights of victims.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: can the minister stand in the House and assure my constituents that steps were taken to ensure that the victims of crime in Alberta were represented while the federal government was drafting this legislation?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. There was quite a bit of consultation, particularly at our federal-provincial-territorial Justice ministers' meetings, on this particular topic. We have written the federal government many times dealing with the rights of victims, but the most important one that we've talked about is reducing the need for preliminary inquiries. This can get very technical, but in layperson's terms, this would limit the number of times that a victim has to face the accused and testify, something that I think is very important. It would also help resolve cases more quickly. So we will continue advancing this as part of our common-sense, conservative approach to justice.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: how is this government moving to ensure that as many burdens as possible are removed for the victims of crime?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. This government introduced a victims of crime fund, where money from surcharges on fines is put into the fund for victims of crime. This year the Premier and I just announced \$9.1 million worth of new funding for 41 community police-based programs. What does this mean? This helps Albertans affected by criminal acts, including domestic violence, elder abuse, assault, and sexual exploitation. Some have even called it the gold standard.

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

### Disaster Recovery Program Administration

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the Ministry of Municipal Affairs admitted that only \$48 million in DRP spending has been approved by LandLink and received by Albertans attempting to rebuild after the flood. This week we learned that \$87 million was spent on underutilized temporary shelters. Now, we understand that there was some need for temporary shelters, but this government doesn't seem to understand the disconnect between the dismissal of handing out millions of dollars in contracts while ensuring that everyday Albertans have to fight tooth and nail for any dollar from the DRP program. How can the minister justify nickel and diming everyday Albertans while blindly handing over millions in sole-sourced contracts?

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

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, those folks in the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, and I understand that you have to front-load in an emergency. You have to make sure that there are enough supplies to meet the demand. Simply, there were a hundred thousand people affected by this flood, 15,000 homes affected, and we wanted to make sure that nobody was left out in the cold as we approached the winter months. It was appropriate planning. We did our best, and we continue to work hard.

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, during budget estimates it was revealed that LandLink has billed taxpayers over \$18 million to nickel and dime Albertans most impacted by the flood. As of a few weeks ago those thousands of victims that the member just referred to have received a total of \$48 million to help them rebuild. Again,

LandLink gets \$18 million; everyday residents, \$48 million. Can the minister help me understand this, please?

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, again, who's nickel and diming here? It's this member when he talks about the civil servants in the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. What I can tell you is that these people served in Afghanistan. They're former police officers. They're former paramedics. They're part of our Canadian military that head up that agency. It's just disrespectful that this member would come out and say that they're nickel and diming people in High River. I can tell you that right now the mayor in High River is very supportive of this government in terms of what we've done. He said that everything we've done is appropriate and that we've spent the money well for the taxpayers.

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, given that in estimates it was revealed that LandLink may be able to bill taxpayers upwards of another \$13 million to close the outstanding 275 appeals from the flood and given that LandLink has been advised that their contract will not be renewed once these appeals are closed, how can the minister assure Albertans that the money will flow to the flood victims as opposed to the coffers of this private company?

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, again, we all recognize that this is the worst natural disaster in Canadian history. Ten months after this flood people are moving back into their homes. We've seen a decrease down to 300 people in these temporary neighbourhoods. That means the work that we're doing is actually in fact working. What I can tell you also is that all of this is applicable under the federal DRP. This money is coming back to Alberta through the federal government and their \$2.8 million commitment to this province. I can tell you that everybody is working together. Ten months after the flood we're doing our best for Albertans. We're doing it with them, for them, and beside them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Government Data Security

**Mr. Young:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rightfully, a lot of attention has been paid to the protection of government-managed information. In fact, this Legislature has implemented many pieces of legislation that have addressed it. However, the protection of information and data is only as secure as the system's weakest link, the protocols established, and the ready responses in place. We cannot simply legislatively protect the front door when our data and information are exposed at the back door. Risk must be managed and incidents responded to. To the Minister of Service Alberta: does Alberta have effective province-wide IT security measures in place?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I can attest that the Department of Service Alberta has a very vigorous set of information security management directives that set the minimum standards for all departments, yet every department still goes through and can raise those standards for any sort of nuances that they may require in order to make sure that they have protected data in their systems. But we never presume that we are perfect. We constantly are vigorous in making sure that we're updating those standards and are securing the data sets that are so critical to keep private within our departments.

**Mr. Young:** Given the 2011 world-wide RSA token recall due to the associate algorithms being compromised, has the province of Alberta recalled the compromised RSA tokens and continued to use two-factor authentication for access to provincial systems?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our provider for those tokens, EMC, advised us about the security breach. My understanding is that they had advised us that they didn't have to recall any of those tokens. They, in fact, enhanced their security systems and gave us the same protocol so that we could enhance ours. We didn't need to recall those systems, and we continue to be vigilant.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Young:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: has a risk profile for systems been established, and have users, developers, system managers, contractors, or otherwise undergone required screening certifications through the established national RCMP standards for security clearances?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I already mentioned our information security management directives that apply to all departments, but our security protocols that are in place in every department are very standard as well. So if it's a government employee that's going to be handling sensitive material, we have a security and background check for them, but any company that's doing work that's going to affect secure data or sensitive data or sensitive data systems also has to prove that they have gone through the same sort of security protocol check.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Lesser Slave Lake.

### Electricity Prices

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Electric System Operator's announcement last week caused the electricity forward and futures market to spike immediately. Alberta consumers are now going to pay 30 to 40 per cent more as a result of this price spike. On Tuesday the minister said that prices have not gone up yet. Does this minister not understand how price spikes in the forward and futures markets are passed on to consumers, and can she explain this lack of understanding?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I said the other day was – and I'm glad to see the member has another question today and has negotiated that with his party – with regard to: in January we had some price increases, and then in February and March they had gone down, and in April, right now, it's at \$7, and it's the lowest that it has been in months. That is exactly what I said the other day.

**Mr. Anglin:** Let's see if we can get you to actually answer a question.

Given that the Market Surveillance Administrator recently reported that economic withholding caused electricity prices to rise and given that the minister so far will not answer questions about economic withholding, can the minister explain to Albertans



and to this Assembly what economic withholding is, and how does this benefit consumers?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there are any issues with regard to any of the electricity system, the MSA has the opportunity, if there is any anticompetitive behaviour, to bring those forward and bring them over to the AUC. We have independent bodies to make sure that our consumers in Alberta are protected. If things are brought forward, that means that the independent bodies are doing the job and that the system is working.

**Mr. Anglin:** Can't sell it, can you?

Can the minister explain to consumers why their utility bills have gone up so fast, and can she assure them it won't get worse?

**Mrs. McQueen:** Mr. Speaker, I will say it again, and I will say it slower. We have seen that in January the prices were higher. In February and March and April now of this year, April being the lowest we've seen in months – if you don't like the fluctuations as Albertans, and we want to make sure the consumers are protected, we have plans in place so that they can have an amount, that they would know each month what that is. I'd be happy to answer that question over and over and over for the member until he actually gets it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, the time for question period has elapsed. We have considerable business to do under the Routine yet, and the Government House Leader's eye has caught my attention.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that we waive 7(7) and continue with the daily Routine past 3 o'clock.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader has asked for consent to proceed with this business of Routine until we complete it, which takes us past 3 o'clock probably. Does anybody object to that?

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Let us proceed. We will go straight on with the next item.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Let us begin with the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

#### Canadian Search Dog Association

**Ms Kubinec:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently we celebrated National Volunteer Week across the country, and I'd like to take the opportunity to speak today about a wonderful organization that serves my constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock as well as the Edmonton and Alberta and Canada areas.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting Chris Kaulbars and Soleil, a female German shepherd, when we attended an event in Legal. Chris and Soleil are members of the Canadian Search Dog Association and are based out of Edmonton. This Canadian Search Dog Association is a provincial nonprofit group of dedicated individuals who volunteer their time, energy, and resources to train search workers and search dogs to aid the RCMP in searches

for lost or missing persons and/or evidence. They are ready to respond 24 hours a day.

Not only do their members spend hundreds of hours training for searches; they also volunteer their time and knowledge to assist others. Through a program called the adventure smart program they teach young people what to do to help themselves should they ever become lost in the woods.

At various events the public gets an opportunity to get up close and personal with these incredible dogs, and their handlers can answer questions and maybe even do demonstrations if the venues allow it. If schedules permit, dogs and their handlers may be able to visit schools, Scout groups, or organizations to talk about CSDA.

I'd like to use a particular quote from their website that sums up the organization perfectly. "We are volunteers. We do this for our communities, for the challenge and for the opportunity to put our training to good use for the benefit of others. We do this for the love of working with our dogs." There is no doubt that it can be fun, but a search is a real, life-and-death situation that demands a level of care, competence, and professionalism equal to that of a paid professional.

For anyone who would like more information about this wonderful volunteer organization or to donate, please visit [www.canadiansearchdogs.com](http://www.canadiansearchdogs.com).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

#### All-terrain Vehicle Safety

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. All-terrain vehicles are firing up across the province. This government likes to talk prevention but does not invest in prevention. Helmets prevent injuries, plain and simple. We expect another 20 all-terrain vehicle related deaths this year according to the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. Sadly, the trend is increasing, not decreasing.

When a child turns 14, they can drive a car only with an adult present, but when a child can reach the handlebars of an ATV, there's nothing stopping them from driving it alone. Alberta and the Yukon are the only provinces in Canada that do not require wearing a helmet when using an ATV and do not limit a child on the basis of age from operating one alone. The Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research cites that 41 per cent of all-terrain vehicle related deaths are caused by head injuries, and 80 per cent of those that died from a head injury were not wearing a helmet. Many of these deaths and the 781 ATV-related hospital admissions in 2008 could have been prevented.

Why is a helmet the law when operating a motorbike but not an all-terrain vehicle? Limiting children from operating these powerful machines is, Mr. Speaker, a no-brainer and strongly advocated by the Canadian Paediatric Society. This government in its own 2008 survey showed that 84 per cent of Albertans favour requiring helmets, but they have not moved on the issue. Twenty deaths per year and preventing 800 hospital visits a year should be a concern to a government whose hospital wait times and chronic overcapacity increase the risk and the cost to our public.

For this government it is time to establish helmet requirements and age restrictions for operating ATVs. Albertans have requested it. Experts and other provinces have supported this. Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to get off its butt and focus on prevention and safety.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Calgary-Currie.

### World Meningitis Day

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I proudly wear my burgundy ribbon lapel pin in support of World Meningitis Day and the many Canadians such as Shayne who, as we heard in the introduction from the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, have defeated the odds.

Meningitis is a rare, potentially serious infection caused by inflammation to the lining around the brain and the spinal cord. Bacterial meningitis is a risk to all of us, particularly children under the age of five and young adults. An estimated 1 out of 5 healthy teenagers and adults carry the bacteria that can cause meningitis without ever becoming ill, but for others infections can be much more serious. Symptoms can be similar to those of the flu, including fever, nausea, headaches, neck stiffness, sensitivity to light, drowsiness, and muscle and leg pain.

3:00

If not caught in time, Mr. Speaker, this disease can prove fatal within 24 to 48 hours. Immediate treatment is critical, which is why educating Albertans about the causes and symptoms of this disease is vital. Approximately 10 per cent of the individuals who contract the disease will die, and of those who survive, up to 1 in 5 suffer permanent disabilities such as hearing loss, neurological damage, and limb amputation. Meningitis is spread through close contact. The bacteria are spread through coughing, sneezing, kissing, and sharing eating utensils.

Mr. Speaker, on this day patient groups, health professionals, meningitis survivors, and families who are working to reduce the occurrence and impact of meningitis recognize World Meningitis Day. We hope to increase public awareness of meningitis and to promote better understanding of the disease.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Educational Curriculum Redesign

**Ms Cusanelli:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lately there has been much discussion about curriculum redesign. I've been listening with great interest to the views of my colleagues across the way who criticize our math rankings. I hear about all the math experts who say that we are failing on this file. They say: more focus on the basics.

So who are the true experts, Mr. Speaker? Teachers. Teachers know that teaching numeracy is not about standard algorithms. Teachers know and understand that pedagogical standards are more far reaching than that. Our teachers know that sometimes a child needs to see and feel by using math manipulatives while others are able to abstractly compute but need the expert in their classroom to identify and differentiate for that student to apply and synthesize what they've learned.

Where do we really stand? Did we fail our kids in Alberta by not providing the basics, as the critics believe? Well, the 2012 PISA results showed that 96 per cent of 15-year-old students succeeded at answering ability questions in math, basic facts. Fortunately, I have a great deal of my own expertise that I can rely on to talk about curriculum design, teaching methods, assessment, and more. Mr. Speaker, I'm not one to overlook a problem or pretend that things are lovely when they aren't, and I think our opposition is barking up the wrong tree. It would seem to me that

if 96 per cent of our middle-school-aged students are showing success at answering the basic math questions on a PISA, then this is a pretty indisputable result.

Like I said, I'm not here to glaze over problems because I do believe there is work to do, but it isn't with rote memorization. That isn't what the data says to me. We need to prepare our students for a future in which they can evaluate by assessing theories, comparing ideas and outcomes, solving, and recommending. That is what we ought to be focusing our curriculum redesign on.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. McAllister:** From the member that advocated for no zeros, that was rich.

### Hockey Marathon for Charity

**Mr. McAllister:** Mr. Speaker, what an honour it is for me to rise today and talk about the ultimate hockey game for charity, which is coming up in Chestermere. From May 4 through May 14 40 hockey players are going to attempt – and I'm sure they'll succeed – to set a new world record for the longest hockey game ever played. They do have some experience with this as well. It was many of these same players that set the current record of 246 hours just two years ago. Why are they doing it again, you ask? They are doing it for the kids. Last go-round they raised \$1.7 million for the Alberta Children's hospital. A big portion of that went to kids with cancer. This year they plan on breaking the \$2 million mark, and the proceeds will again go to the Alberta Children's hospital, the foundation for brain health. They will also help with flood relief in Alberta.

They have been training for months. Clearly, they have to. They play four-hour shifts, they take a break, and then they come back and play for four hours more. They will do that for 10-plus days. This is not just a physical challenge; it is very much a mental challenge, too.

The last time they did this, in fact, Mr. Speaker, one player with a broken foot hobbled to centre ice and spent his shift there, passing pucks so he could stay. Another needed dental work after getting a puck in the face. They can't leave the rink, though, so he got his stitches and, as they say in hockey terms, sucked it up until the end of the game. I could go on and on about their sacrifices. It's really impressive.

I also, though, Mr. Speaker, want to give a shout-out to the town of Chestermere for rolling out the welcome mat for these players and to everybody at the rec centre who is turning the arena into a home for everyone involved for 10-plus days. Eight hundred volunteers will come together to make this happen. It's extraordinary. I say to Alex Halat and every one of his hockey heroes and volunteers: good luck and Godspeed. I look forward to being there on May 4 for the kickoff and to congratulate them at the finale on the 14th.

### Measles Immunization

**Mr. Webber:** Mr. Speaker, with the increased cases of measles being reported in the province, I think it might be time that Alberta Health reconsiders its position on mandatory vaccinations. Increasing numbers of families and individuals are moving to Alberta. Currently there is a mandatory reporting for infectious diseases such as measles or a requirement for up-to-date inoculations.

A small segment of the population doubts the value of preventative inoculations. This is a considerable risk, however, appreciating the impact of measles, its highly contagious nature,

and the dangers imposed by a measles outbreak. I have heard from many of my constituents that it is time to consider mandatory vaccinations as has been emphasized by the medical officers of public health.

In order for a disease to mutate, it actually has to be transmitted to a host. The continuing reoccurrence of measles in our communities allows the opportunity for the disease to change. Potentially, the current vaccinations could lose their effectiveness due to the possibility of new strains developing. As well, the lives of citizens in Alberta that are particularly vulnerable to these types of infections are at risk each day. Unfortunately, it seems that for some the educational approach has not prevented this disease, and illnesses that should have been eradicated continue to occur. Some citizens are just not acknowledging the seriousness of the information shared with them.

Schools in Calgary have had to exclude students and teachers who have been exposed in order to lessen the risk of the latest measles cases. In fact, one high school has had to do so right at the important time of pre-exam work. The risks and the actual costs associated are completely unnecessary. Perhaps it's time to reassess this decision, and perhaps Alberta Health should do more than encourage and inform and actually require all students entering the Alberta educational system to be vaccinated. I would hate to hear of even one more incident of this completely preventable disease popping up here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give oral notice of the introduction of Bill 12, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2014, and Bill 13, the Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2014.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona or someone on behalf of.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona 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 system that is accessible and affordable for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. Actually, I'm tabling on behalf of my colleague the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. I have two tablings that reference the questions that he asked today in question period. The first is the appropriate number of copies of a report dated June 12, 2012, and released by Alberta Health Services. It's entitled Vaccine Hesitancy in Alberta, and it was prepared by Dr. Judy MacDonald, medical officer of health, Alberta Health Services.

The second tabling is an act that appears in Ontario, which details how children are required to have immunization before they may attend the first day of school. The immunizations are the usual set that we've been discussing today, including, particularly, measles.

We also have from New Brunswick copies of a similar Department of Education and Early Childhood Development policy, which is about proof of immunization for children before they attend school.

Finally, there's an article produced by CBC Radio that references Ontario, New Brunswick, and Manitoba all requiring students to be vaccinated for diseases.

Thank you.

3:10

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following document has been deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Griffiths, Minister of Service Alberta, pursuant to the Vital Statistics Act the Alberta Vital Statistics annual review 2012.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I'll just revert quickly to a tabling that I have. I'm tabling today a memo from the Member for Red Deer-North requesting early consideration of her private member's bill, Bill 203, in Committee of the Whole on Monday, May 5.

Thank you.

We are at points of order, and I don't believe we had any today. Would I be correct? [interjection] I am correct? Okay. Thank you.

Let's move on, then.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 11

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014

[Adjourned debate April 23: Ms Jansen]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake had requested an opportunity to speak. We can come back to her.

Let's go on to Edmonton-Centre, then, shall we?

**Ms Blakeman:** I'd be delighted. Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak to Bill 11, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014, in second reading. Now, I would like to commend the responsiveness of the previous and the current minister responsible for children's services. This is to a great degree flowing from a quite incredible series of articles that were produced by two of our major newspapers in Alberta that, with much data mining and the use of FOIPs, were able to put together a really clear and quite chilling picture of what was happening to children who were under the care of the state, of the government of Alberta. What they discovered was that most of us were not aware of – and some people would say that the government had deliberately obscured it – the number of children who had in fact died while in care. There was great public pressure upon the government to update and improve the system.

A couple of points in particular kept coming forward. One of them was the prohibition against the publication of the name of a child who had died while in care or the name of anyone connected with them. This, in fact, had caused a great deal of grief and

difficulty for a number of people because they were actually being prohibited from publicly grieving for their deceased child because they couldn't name them. They couldn't put it on a tombstone. They couldn't have an article in the paper or an obituary that referenced that they were under the care and control of the government at the time.

It was really a bit of a throwback, or I suppose – I'm sorry – considering the secrecy of this government, a throw forward. They do like to keep things to themselves. There was a great deal of pressure on the previous minister and the current minister to make some adjustments.

What we see in this bill is the establishment of, I'm going to call it, an expert committee, and I believe we've already been introduced to several of the members who have been appointed to this. They're calling it a council. Chief Wilton Littlechild was here in the Assembly the other day and was introduced as being a member of that. Boy, that's bringing a lot of expertise to the table if that's the quality of people that are being appointed to this council. The idea is to look at the evolving nature of children in government care and how they're recorded and dealt with.

Now, of course, with my interest in activism and changing public policy but also in protection of personal information, I was most interested in the sections around the publication bans. When I first read this, I thought: what? You know how I scribble on the sides of the bills, and I've got scribbles on the sides saying: "Wait a minute. This is only allowing people to talk about living children. Deceased children had been taken out." But, no, in fact, if you go along, you see that they've dealt with that. Then I went back and read it even more and ended up coming away from it going: "What the blankety-blank is going on here? This is not what we were led to believe is going on."

I was sure, when I listened to the minister's press conferences and various releases and things, that that ban was lifted. That was the end impression that I got: the ban or the prohibition against publishing or using in a public way a child's name who died while under the care of government was going to be gone. As with many things with this government that are so frustrating to me, the answer is: sort of. And here's the sort-of part. What's actually being done here is that they have removed "deceased child" from the old prohibition, but what it says is that, in the opinion of the director,

a director may publish or consent to the publication of the name or a photograph of a child or of the child's parent or guardian and other information . . . [if] the publication is in the child's best interest or necessary for the proper administration of justice.

Let me double-check that I, in fact, read that correctly. Yeah. In fact, I'm thinking: "Okay. Good."

The next section:

(b) A child who is 16 . . . or older may publish, or consent to the publication of, the child's name or photograph in a manner that reveals that the child has received intervention services.

Okay. Then we get into this:

(c) A Court may, on the application of  
 (i) a child,  
 (ii) a parent or guardian of a child, or  
 (iii) any interested party, with leave of the Court,  
 grant permission to the child, the parent or guardian or the interested party

to publish or consent for the name and the photograph and various other things saying that the child has been receiving intervention if it's in the child's best interests or the public interest.

That's not a straight-ahead lifting of that prohibition. Once again we have these – how do I describe them? – kinds of defining

words that are used, or let me call them apron strings or ties. You're never quite away from this. If someone, any one of those groups or those defined, decides that it's not in the best interests of the child, all of this goes away. Okay. Well, there are a lot of different arguments that can be made about whether it's in the best interests of the child – the child, I'm reminding you, is no longer with us; they are deceased – or in the public interest. Again, a lot of people can bring arguments forward about whether it is or is not in the best interests of the public to know this.

I'm finding that this great lifting of a prohibition about talking about a deceased child and their name, photograph, and things like this is not actually what I thought it was going to be, that there's a little more whittling away at the central part of this – or not.

It goes on and really allows an ex parte application to the court to have that ban in place. People think: "Oh. Well, that's okay. Anybody that wants to can go to the court, and the court is going to decide." Yes, they are, but the court is always going to decide based on what they're reading and in the context of the rest of the legislation. Is there evidence in this act that there's thinking behind it that children's names and photographs and identifying information and that of their families might be withheld? Well, yeah, when you're allowing them to go to court and have this taken out.

3:20

A director who works for the department, a family member, or with leave of the court any other person – a pretty wide definition; it has to be approved by the court but: any other person – that's involved here can make an ex parte application to the court. Now, ex parte is one part. It means that it's without the knowledge. I believe – and I don't have a legal background here; there are lots of lawyers; I'm sure they'll correct me – you don't have to notify the other people that are involved in this. You just go to court – you have no obligation to tell them what you're up to – and if you're granted this, you've got it; there's a ban.

I'm thinking: okay; well, that's not exactly a straight-ahead lifting of this prohibition. It actually allows a lot of different groups to get in here and get a ban put in place without anybody else knowing that that's what's going on. Okay. I'm not keen on this, but I think: "Well, keep looking, Laurie. Big pile of manure there. There's got to be a pony underneath it." No. In fact, it isn't.

We've heard a lot of talk recently about equality and inequality, and I am always very cautious, when we talk about access to courts and needing to be able to go to court, of the inequality that exists in our society, particularly for women and people coming from a lower income, in their ability to be comfortable with, be familiar with, and have the money to access court proceedings.

What am I looking at in this bill? Well, once again there is, whether the minister meant to or not, a bias in favour of the department or, with the court's permission, any other person that is named being able to go back to court, without telling anybody else, and get this ban put back in place. Who is the group of people that is least likely to be able to find out about this, fight it, and get to court? It's probably the family of the kids because if your child is in care, you are statistically more likely to be coming out of a particular socioeconomic group.

So is this the ban that people thought they were going to get? Is this the lifting of the ban that you could publicize and talk publicly about children that had died while in government care? No, it's not. Are people going to have equal access and equitable access to be able to get a ban put in place? No. For a family that wanted to be able to do this, any director in the program or anyone else where the court says that it's okay without anyone else knowing can go and get this ban put in place.

So there's no pony, Mr. Speaker, underneath all of this. There's no pony there. The ban is still, actually, quite easy to get put in place by just about anybody that's interested in doing it and, particularly, makes it an unequal access to, most likely, the direct family members of the child. That's not what I thought I was getting here, so I feel tricked. I'm not a lawyer, but I'm not unfamiliar with the law. I've worked a lot with administrative law, and, in fact, everything we do here is administrative law as we create legislation, so I'm feeling like this isn't what we were all told was going to be coming.

There are a number of other kinds of legal beagle stuff here about, you know, who has to be served with a copy and that kind of thing. But in my reading of that, that's what we're looking at around that ban, and that was one thing that I was particularly interested in.

Let me just reference something else here. You know, one of the things that I have talked a lot about in this particular session is the lack of access, particularly for people of very low economic status in Alberta, even as low as for people that are on full benefit programs; for example, AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped, or Alberta Works or even people working full-time flat out on minimum wage. Actually, I think the people working on minimum wage would fall under the cut-off and therefore would be able to qualify for assistance from legal aid, but the person on AISH is too high, and they will not be able to get legal aid.

You start matching that lack of being able to get access to legal aid with the family that is trying to now perhaps get into court and put a ban in place, which the family could do, I admit, and it seemed to be the families who most wanted those bans against publication taken off. For the family of a child to get into court to try and fight this somehow, they're very unlikely to be able to access legal aid.

So this all starts to connect to each other. We have a law that is supposed to be changed to lift a ban, which it does, but it allows a lot of people to get the ban put back in place. For those people that would be most interested in trying to fight this, they are going to be very unlikely to be able to get legal help to be able to do it because they're quite likely to not be able to access legal aid given the cuts that we've had to legal aid in this province.

**Mr. Denis:** There have been no cuts.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, the minister likes to say that there have been no cuts, but if you don't cut a program over a long period of time or several years in a row, inflation is going to do it for you, Mr. Speaker, and in the end you have less money. If I go into a store today and say, "Thank you; I'd like to buy my groceries with money that's actually valued from 2008," my money is not going to go as far. If I'm standing there with everything in the envelope that I used to get in 2008 and I'm standing there with it in 2014 at Safeway trying to dole it out of that envelope, it's not going to go as far, which has the same effect.

The Minister of Justice likes to argue semantics with me. I know he likes to do that. I swear to goodness that he goes home at night and has little semantic arguments with himself just to entertain himself. Because he uses it so much here, I know he's very keen on it.

The bottom line is: are people going to be able to get access to this? Will more people get access to more legal aid? No, they're not. [interjection] He's welcome to join the argument and claim that they will, but that's not what most of the legal community is telling me. But, you know, maybe he's got a different connection to them.

Let me just go back a bit here. The idea of the council: an excellent idea as a way of looking at the situation, being able to make sure that we are being welcoming and accepting of different kinds of families coming from different places that are, either long term or short term, struggling with their children to a point where they need government intervention.

You know, I have a very busy constituency office. I now have two caseworkers working in there, and we deal with some very complex, multilayered issues that my constituents are struggling with. One of the areas of casework that we do almost nothing with is children's services. If we get one or two cases a year, we all freak out because we can't remember who the contact is, and we have to dig through all of our contact books to find out who it is we're supposed to call in children's services. Why is that? Well, because the children in my community are overwhelmingly children that are coming as new immigrants or as new Canadians and living in the centre of the city while they get established, within a couple of years they move out, buy a house, or move into other areas, and they're gone from my community. Interestingly, we get almost no child welfare calls or cases from that community. They tend to work more as a village, and everyone pulls together and helps to raise the kids.

**3:30**

Frankly, the urban aboriginal people who live in my community: some of them do struggle. But I need to remind people that, overwhelmingly, urban aboriginal people are doing very well, thank you very much, and don't fit as much into that stereotype as people seem to think.

I don't have a lot of experience with child welfare, so that's telling you something. It's not always what we think it is, and I think it is important that as we work with things like the new council that's being put in place, we are conscious of people from different backgrounds and different cultures that are moving into this country and will become part of our history.

You know, there are many people in this room. There's a very strong Ukrainian background, people from Ukrainian backgrounds in here. There are some very outspoken Poles, a number of Scots in here. There are some backgrounds that we're quite familiar with, but we're not necessarily familiar with people from the Sudan or Somalia or Eritrea or Nigeria or any number of other places from which we are now receiving people that have been involved in war, in torture, and in trauma. We need to be aware of that because they are becoming part of the fabric of our life in Alberta, and we need to be able to understand how to work with those communities and perhaps even work with children that are victims of war and of torture and of trauma because they may well end up being children that are in government care or that need government assistance, and that's a whole other ball of wax than what we're used to.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak to Bill 11, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014. Before we get started, I want to applaud the Minister of Human Services for going outside of the boundaries. From the time he took the ministry, he has really worked hard to propel this forward and has really worked hard to give the illusion and take some solid steps to have openness and transparency in this portfolio and actually do some of the things that have been missing for a significant period of time.

All that being said, I don't think we can look at this bill until we really understand why we're here in the first place. It's just this simple, Mr. Speaker. Four years ago a journalist asked a simple question: how many children in Alberta had died either while in foster care or after they had come to the attention of the child welfare system? She did this through FOIP.

The next few steps of that is where it becomes alarming for Albertans, and that's really why we're here today. When that journalist, Karen Kleiss, set out to find those answers, she discovered chaos and bureaucratic wrangling like none other she'd ever seen. Her fellow journalist Paula Simons wrote and I think sums it up quite well:

No one in the Alberta government would tell her. No one, it eventually emerged, could tell her. The government not only refused to release the data, citing its own sweeping confidentiality rules. It wasn't actually tracking the numbers.

What's interesting is that this secrecy and this hiding behind the confidentiality statements, quite frankly, made this journalist mad. So she took the matter to her boss at the paper, and they decided to go to court. For the next four years journalists and those papers, the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal*, had to fight this government to answer a single question about how many children had died in care or had died while in the child welfare system.

In 2013 they received a judgment that was victorious and said: yes, you should. It was only then that this journalist and her colleague Darcy Henton were able to actually access the government records. They came back to them heavily censored, and the documents confirmed what they actually thought was their worst suspicion, which is why they took this case to court. There were deaths, but also the deaths looked like they had been far worse than originally reported. It was interesting to these two journalists that the government didn't even know what was going on. As these two journalists first reported, "The Alberta government has dramatically under-reported the number of child welfare deaths over the past decade, undermining public accountability and thwarting efforts at prevention and reform."

The *Calgary Herald* and The *Edmonton Journal* published an in-depth series of articles detailing that a staggering 145 children had died in care since 1999, but this was triple the 56 deaths that were revealed by the government in annual reports. What's more interesting about that, Mr. Speaker, is that we all sat in this House last year when we listened to the Premier talk about how many deaths of children in care there were, and she supported the minister of that time, the current Premier, when he stood up on the floor on November 25, 2013, and said that 56 children had died in care, not 145 but 56. He also went on to say, "All incidents of serious injury or death are reported to the quality assurance council for investigation."

Unfortunately, that wasn't quite exactly accurate. The *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal* articles reveal the huge chasm between what Albertans were being told and what was actually happening. We also know that those initial reports obtained after the four-year battle found that 150 children in government care died from January 1999 to June 2013. What was even more staggering, though, is that when the current Minister of Human Services took over this portfolio, the number jumped to 741 children and teens known to child welfare authorities, including those living with their families but still receiving some form of service, that had died in the same time frame.

Mr. Speaker, there's a fundamental problem when the government claims to Albertans that 56 children have died in care and in reality 741 of them had died during the same period. There's also a fundamental problem when the only way we can find out about that is that journalists have to start a four-year battle

in court to find out information that everyday Albertans should know.

These numbers are appalling more so because we're talking about everyday Albertan children, shattered lives, and families wondering what happened to their children. We're talking about stories like a young mother who lost her child, then cleaned up her act. She then had to search for six years before discovering that her child had died as an infant.

I talked to that young mom's mother. She talked about her daughter's story. She talked about how her daughter was addicted, on drugs, on alcohol, completely gone off-path. She talked about how the child welfare system had come in and taken her child away. She talked about how shortly after that apprehension her daughter started to get clean, to clean up her act and become a good mom. And she talked about her daughter's six-year search for her daughter so that she could rebuild her family, so that she could at least say that she was sorry, so that she could at least write a letter to her and let her know why she had to be adopted out or in the system. She wanted to go back and rectify a terrible situation, and for six years that young girl was not even told that her daughter had died as an infant.

Mr. Speaker, that is shocking as a mom, as a dad, as a family member, as a caregiver, to not know for six years that the person that you had given over to the public system actually died within their first year of life. That is just unheard of in this province. But, unfortunately, it happened right here, and today we would not know anything about this if not for the work of the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal*.

I think we have to remember that we're not here because the government decided to do the right thing. While this bill is a good first step, it didn't come as a result of doing the right thing. It came as a result of a shaming. It came as a result of not actually telling the truth. It came as a result of appearing like information was being withheld, hidden, and secret. It naturally leads to questions like: what is the government trying to hide; why wouldn't they want to talk about that; how do you fix a system that's broken if you don't even have accurate data to figure it out?

3:40

The unfortunate problem is that they actually had the data. So, then, why wouldn't you release it in the first FOIP that came? We could have saved four years. There were children who died within those four years. We could have changed processes. We could have made the Child and Youth Advocate independent in 2010, not in 2012. We could have identified systemic issues in the process, in the system. We could have worked with our aboriginal communities to create better kinship care. We could have worked with our Somali communities to create better care for their children. We could have done something. Instead, this government's approach was to fight them in court.

The *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald* articles started an avalanche of questions and concerns, and many of them are still unanswered today. I have no doubt that this minister is actually going to work hard to try and get those answers. I hope that his government and I hope that his cabinet and his colleagues will help him do that.

What we saw next in January was the round-table. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I attended the round-table, and it was a moving experience. I think it was a good step to have the round-table. I think it was a great step to have experts there. I think it was a fantastic step for the minister to admit that 741 children had died in care or under intervention services. I think it was a great step for the minister to be humble, for the minister to bring people

together, and for the minister to listen to what he heard at that round-table. I think this bill for the most part does just that.

Several of the stories that we heard that day were of three young women who had been in care, which is where I'm going to go next with my concerns in this bill. They talked about the publication ban and how that ban affected their lives and how the current ban meant that they had no identity, how it prevented anyone from giving them an identity, how it prevented them from even talking about what was wrong with the system, how it could be fixed, and the fact that they had died.

I'll just read you a short segment from an *Edmonton Journal* article on February 3 that refers to these three young women.

The women's appearance at the Child Intervention Roundtable offered an unprecedented opportunity to hear how foster children feel about an Alberta law that makes it illegal to publish their names and photographs, even if they die while in care . . . The young women rejected the "in care" label and said they want to be treated just like anyone else.

Samantha went on to say:

How do you feel like a human being? How do you feel like a person, if . . . there's some publication ban saying that you don't exist, your story will not be shared, you will be forgotten? It's traumatizing.

Faven, who was 19, said that

family should have the right to release information, but she wouldn't want the details of her own life made public. She used a nickname on the panel, not her real name.

She went on to say:

I personally wouldn't want my information released, and I wouldn't want people to think, "Oh, Faven died, and she was in (foster) care." I just don't like the fact that we have the labelling . . . A child dies. A child is a child, and I don't think there should be any restrictions or limitations if the child is in care, or not. I don't think that I see the whole separation.

Monique, who was 20, also said:

Children and youth living in foster care are the same as other Albertans, and shouldn't be labelled.

I grew up with other children and youth; if one of them had died while I was in care, and I couldn't speak about it, that would definitely change the way I healed.

She also said:

We live with children of all ages . . . as well as foster families. They have their own children, who are not in care. They cannot speak about us. I don't think that it's fair, that we have that label on us, and we live with people who do not have that label.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that it's difficult to balance the rights of privacy and public interest. The current ban, that exists pre this bill, clearly went too far. However, I think this bill also goes too far the other way. I think that we need to take a moment and listen to why some of the media talk about why they need access to this.

Before I go there, I just want to tell you a story about when I was at the round-table. Most people understand the issue of Phoenix Sinclair. There was a young lady who was there representing the government of Manitoba, and she said that Phoenix needed a voice, and without the media being able to report about the tragic situation of Phoenix Sinclair, then there would be no way we could fix the system by actually being allowed to submit the photo and the name of the child who was so tragically abused and eventually killed by his mother. There would be no ability to fix the system, and it wouldn't have been real.

I think we also have to identify with why Paula Simons has raised concerns about the publication ban. She believes that this bill will give "the government extraordinary powers to cover up the deaths of children in care" by actually becoming the proxy

who could apply for the ban. It could actually be the family member of the dead child. The band member, a grandparent, a sister, all of those could apply for an ex parte for a publication ban.

So could a third party, such as a First Nations band council. But while the ministry or band might have resources for such legal battles, parents, especially the sort who might typically be involved with the child welfare system, wouldn't likely have the resources to file an ex parte application. So while the act appears to empower parents, they're really at the mercy of the ministry and third-party actors.

I think we have to take that concern seriously.

She also goes on to say:

Under the proposed bill, a child's family, including siblings and grandparents, would be exempt from the ban, [even if they themselves requested the ban.] Family members could use social media sites . . . identifying the child and themselves. Mainstream media would still be bound by the ban, meaning that the public would only get to hear a narrow perspective . . .

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to work with the minister, and I want to work with the minister, and I'm hoping that we can find a middle ground on how we reach the difference between privacy and public interest.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is now available.

Seeing no one, let us move on to Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with great interest to speak here in second reading on Bill 11, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014. Certainly, this bill was very warmly anticipated or very eagerly anticipated when we heard that the ministry was intending to release something here this spring. I think that so many different groups of the general public were also very interested in seeing some resolution in regard to clarifying how we receive information from the ministry and how we investigate deaths and incidents in this ministry as well.

Certainly, the minister himself characterizes Bill 11 as being part of a year-long process. I guess I would like to give both the ministry and the government in general the benefit of the doubt, to recognize that we are going to move forward on more issues around this issue. I guess there's lots of room for improvement from the previous circumstance, but I'm just starting to sort of look at this as the public would, from the outside working in. There are lots of details about how we report from the ministry here that perhaps we could clarify and somehow sharpen as well.

I think that, certainly, improving the publication opportunities for information from the ministry is good, but the details in Bill 11, as we see it, certainly still need work. I think that this does clarify an internal practice, an internal review, the death review committee, which is good as well. This will certainly help to improve the internal practice and quality within the ministry; however, Mr. Speaker, we just still don't see a clear provision for ensuring that fatalities or serious injury investigations will be published. I think that is at the heart of what people were looking for, and I just don't necessarily see that it's here at this point, still.

3:50

I mean, instead, as far as I can see, they will publish the recommendations from the internal review, but then the public still can't really assess the merits of recommendations without understanding the facts or the history upon which they are based. You need to see the whole picture, not just the recommendations.

Otherwise, it's like we are doing sort of a forensic detective process that can only lead to, perhaps, confusion and sometimes misinformation. As well, we're not quite entirely sure whether this act will be publishing the regular details on the status of recommendations. Certainly, this needs to happen on an ongoing basis, and it's not clear whether that is going to happen either.

The bill, as far as we can see, is still not reporting on fatalities on an as-they-occur basis. Instead, it's sort of piling up and reporting at the end of the year, right? That's what they were doing before, and as a result they only reported a fraction of fatalities and even went as far as to sort of make it confusing, saying that the numbers that were reported were reflective of all categories such as children in care, children with their own family but receiving supports that were known to the ministry, a child that was in care within the last two years, or a child that died of natural causes but could have also been related to neglect somehow.

Since 2008 we were not getting all of those categories in their totality, so that's why, when the *Edmonton Journal* did their FOIP and did their larger report – and thanks to them for doing that – we saw reports of so many more fatalities last fall, because before we were only getting partial statistics. I think that that's something that's glaringly obvious that we need to do. I think that through reporting on an as-it-occurs basis, reporting on incidents as they do occur, we might be able to reduce that confusion with this bill.

We as the Alberta New Democrats are looking for an advocate that has the resources to investigate all cases in all of those categories, as I pointed out, right? Last year, really, the Child and Youth Advocate only had the capacity to report about between 3 and 5 cases out of more than 20 that we can see that actually existed. Now the mandate has been expanded to include the deaths of children who were in care within the last two years, but still the commissioner is without sufficient resources to really pursue that as they should, as we learned from a review of both his resources and a report that he made to our committee.

It's important, I think, as well to recognize some of the inconsistencies or some of the confusions that the media is seeing with the ability to report. In my mind, if you are building a means by which you are going to release names of children that died in care and so forth, then it should be done in its totality and not have this sort of partial ban, where mainstream media seems to be still excluded from some cases, but then social media seems to be some way by which the information can leak out.

Also, sometimes you have unfortunate circumstances – I mean, all of this is dealing with unfortunate circumstances – you know, where some family members might be in dispute or not in communication with each other when there is information about a child that has been injured or died in care. You have to be able to apply the law equally and evenly even amongst different family members who might be in dispute in regard to what's happening to a child in that family.

I think that in principle, as I've come to always remind myself during second reading, this is a good idea – right? – to pursue the greater disclosure as recommended in Bill 11. However, I think that there are some inconsistencies here that we really do need to deal with before we consider passing this bill or supporting the bill, and I think that's a good chance for us to do this in the Legislature.

Again, I do commend the minister for bringing this forward. I understand that he is pursuing this as part of a process, a year-long process, and I'm glad that he is using the expertise and the reasonable debate that does take place here in the Legislature to ensure that we build a Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act that everybody can be proud of and that can work for the majority of Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing no one, are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, then.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to second reading of Bill 11, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014. I'm just going to very briefly, for the benefit of all members and Albertans, go over what this act is proposing to amend.

First, it amends the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, amends the publication ban to reverse the onus. Now, for example, a family member or interested party must apply for a court order if they do not want the name or a photograph of a deceased child or names and photos of family members and guardians to be published. Previous to this amendment act, Mr. Speaker, there was a blanket ban, an automatic ban, on identifying information of a deceased child who received services. There was a penalty of \$10,000 or six months in jail. Now, the family member can apply to the court to have it lifted, but this is quite a costly endeavour.

This bill changes the quality assurance framework to add the ability of the minister to appoint a committee for quality assurance purposes and expands the requirements of the director to notify the council of death or injury of a child receiving services, where previously only if they were in care or guardianship at the time could that take place, Mr. Speaker. It expands the mandate of the council to monitor and evaluate strategies and standards with the minister.

Now, it doesn't change the openness of the quality assurance council reporting. The committee only needs to make reports to the minister – in a few moments I'll talk about the concerns that I have with that – as opposed to reporting to the public. The council still needs to make a publicly released report available to the minister in the case of an expert review panel investigation into a death or injury, but there's still no mandatory provision that it must be released publicly.

The second thing is the amendments to the Child and Youth Advocate Act. It changes the mandate of the Child and Youth Advocate to investigate death or injury that occurred within two years of receiving services. Now, previous to this act that we're discussing today, Mr. Speaker, there was only an investigation if a child was receiving services at the time of death or injury. Again, another point that I'll speak to a little bit later is that there is still no increased budget or reporting requirements, which is of great concern for myself and for the Alberta NDP.

Bill 11 is a small step, a tentative step, in the right direction, but again, for us, it doesn't go far enough to have the level of transparency that we want. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy that is in place, which has and can harm the system's ability to improve the lives of children, still exists even with this bill's amendments.

Now, like my colleague from Edmonton-Calder I would like to thank the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald* for the investigative work that they did and the pressure that they put on this government to finally release the full number of deaths of children involved in the child intervention system. I also want to add that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has been a tireless advocate for years on this subject and has been calling for the release of information, of these reports, so that we know. Anyway, we're slowly moving in the right direction, but at the same time when we look at the number of deaths of children in care for this year, the statistic is quite troubling and indicates that we have a lot more work to do.



4:00

Moving to the publication ban. I mean, this is a step to moving towards increased transparency. However, again, we're not quite there yet, Mr. Speaker. A mother of a child who died in care had this to say about the publication ban. "They have failed the child in the utmost way possible and now they are stealing their identity – the only thing they have left . . . It's bad enough to lose a child, but to have it covered up is just wrong and I won't stand for it."

You know, eliminating the automatic publication ban is a positive step. Again, this is long overdue. This is something that the government has been promising, to review the ban, for at least three years. We've spoken about other bills in this way, that again it's another example of knuckle dragging, but eventually you can drag a horse to water. It was put in legislation in 2004 without any consultation with the Privacy Commissioner.

Now, the current ban prevents us from learning how to prevent future deaths and injuries. It shields the government from this criticism, but it also punishes already grieving families who want to tell their story and to have some closure. Further, it dehumanizes these children, who have already been victimized, Mr. Speaker, although this bill moves in the right direction in that it removes the blanket ban and reverses the onus. So the general presumption now is that the media and family can discuss the deceased child and provide the public with information to help us understand.

The bill also wisely safeguards the ability of the courts to nonetheless restrict the publication of this information where necessary in the interests of the child. However, Mr. Speaker, the procedure to obtain these orders to restrict publication presents a number of problems that may reduce the effectiveness of this legislative change. The idea is that now a party must apply to the court for an order to restrict publication. This application is *ex parte*, meaning that it does not need to be done with any notice or any arguments from any other party. The parties who can apply include the family, any interested third party, or the government if they can argue that it's the wishes of the child or in the best interests of the child's surviving siblings.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the government is still reserving the power to get publication bans without any need for notice to or input from any other party like the media or the child's family. Now, in order to have restrictions removed, the media or the other party would have to go through a possibly lengthy court process. You know, the Alberta NDP is also questioning how accessible this procedure is for families who may be rightfully seeking publication restrictions. As we know, court processes are not cheap even in an expedited process. It could create a situation where the government applies for an order contrary to the wishes of the family. At this point the family would have to use their own resources in order to engage the court to get the order lifted. There are other practical problems, including the fact that these orders only apply to those who serve them.

Mr. Speaker, we generally support the idea of the reverse onus. This information should be available to the public, but of course there need to be, obviously, exceptions for the best interest of the child and their family.

For some more effective publication rules we can look to some of the other jurisdictions within Canada, Mr. Speaker. Now, interestingly, only Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have bans similar to Alberta's. Quebec has one, but it actually doesn't enforce it. Ontario and P.E.I. have no restrictions. Saskatchewan and Manitoba allow for the publication of the name and information about the child if it comes from family. B.C. and Newfoundland and Labrador allow the publication of the name and information about the child if it comes from family or other sources. Even in other

jurisdictions with looser restrictions families, though, can and do apply for bans in specific cases where it's necessary to protect the best interests of the surviving children.

In regard to the Child and Youth Advocate, Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to see an expanded investigative mandate. Again, this is something that the NDP has been calling for for years, and the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has repeatedly called for investigations into the death of every child in care or receiving services. Now, interestingly, at the Legislative Offices Committee meeting on November 29, 2013, the NDP brought forward a motion to expand the budget of the Child and Youth Advocate so that these investigations can actually be done. Expanding the mandate is one thing, but if there aren't the resources there for the advocate to do their job, then they're not going to be able to do their job. Instead of acknowledging the budget gap and the effect it's having on the ability of the advocate to investigate and report publicly on the deaths – you can guess who voted this motion down. Of course, it was the PC Party.

Now, it seems that they're finally admitting that the advocate needs an expanded mandate so that we can ensure that we learn from all tragic incidents and learn how to prevent them from happening again, but we see in this bill that there are still certain aspects that are being left out, Mr. Speaker. Allowing the advocate to investigate the deaths or injury of children when the incident occurred within two years of a child receiving services will give us a much more comprehensive understanding of some of the systemic issues that give rise to these tragedies in the first place.

The advocate also serves an important role in providing justice and closure for children who have been injured or have died, certainly, but the office has another important objective of providing independent insight and analysis into the childhood intervention system to ensure that we can make the necessary improvements to prevent future deaths or injuries. In order to fulfill these objectives, the advocate needs to be empowered with adequate resources and mandate.

Now, expanding the mandate in this bill is a great first step, but again a great concern, that the Alberta NDP share, is that without a corresponding expansion in the advocate's resources, you know, this change in the legislation will not have the impact that the government is expecting it to have or that we all hope or desire it to have.

The advocate already confirmed that due to a lack of resources, he has no choice but to prioritize and filter the cases that get reported to his office. Interestingly, from 2012 to '13, Mr. Speaker, 20 cases were reported to the advocate and only four, or 20 per cent of them, proceeded to a full investigative review. The advocate has to differentiate responses to each case because he does not have the adequate resources, and there's no mandatory provision for investigative reviews. That's, again, something that the Alberta NDP has been calling for, that he needs the resources available in order to do his job.

Mr. Speaker, you know, as I said, this bill is a step, a very small step in the right direction. However, we'd like to see much more done in this area. So we will be putting forward amendments during Committee of the Whole, and I look forward to debate and, hopefully, some clarification from the minister.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn to 1:30 p.m. on May 5.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:09 p.m. to Monday, May 5, at 1:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 28th Legislature - 2nd Session (2014)**

**Activity to April 24, 2014**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 199 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 200 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Savings Management Act (\$) (Redford)**

First Reading -- 4 (Mar. 3, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 47-50 (Mar. 4, 2014 eve.), 84-85 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft.), 146-54 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 184-87 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 217-18 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 226-28 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 231-34 (Mar. 12, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 1, 2014; SA 2014 cS-2.5]

### **2 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)**

First Reading -- 84 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 143 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve.), 154-56 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 187-88 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 218 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 234 (Mar. 12, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 13, 2014; SA 2014 c2]

### **3 Securities Amendment Act, 2014 (Horner)**

First Reading -- 62 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 143-45 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 187 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 218 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 234 (Mar. 12, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2014 c3]

### **4 Estate Administration Act (Kubinec)**

First Reading -- 62-63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 145-46 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve.), 184 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft.), 191-93 (Mar. 11, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 229 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 250 (Mar. 13, 2014 aft.), 330 (Mar. 20, 2014 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Apr. 24, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2014 cE-12.5]

### **5 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)**

First Reading -- 119 (Mar. 10, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 174 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft.), 188-90 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 218-20 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 228-29 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 230 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 13, 2014; SA 2014 c1]

### **6 New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2014 (Minister of Municipal Affairs)**

First Reading -- 300 (Mar. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 330-31 (Mar. 20, 2014 aft.), 417-21 (Apr. 10, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 493-503 (Apr. 16, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 522-23 (Apr. 17, 2014 aft.), 657 (Apr. 23, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Apr. 24, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2014 c5]

- 7 Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 417 (Apr. 10, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 488-93 (Apr. 16, 2014 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 503-4 (Apr. 16, 2014 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 523 (Apr. 17, 2014 aft.), 657 (Apr. 23, 2014 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 24, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2014 c6]
- 8 Appropriation Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 488 (Apr. 16, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 519-20 (Apr. 17, 2014 aft.), 523-27 (Apr. 17, 2014 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 559-62 (Apr. 22, 2014 aft.), 563-80 (Apr. 22, 2014 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 610-23 (Apr. 23, 2014 aft.), 633-38 (Apr. 23, 2014 eve., passed on division)  
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 24, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 24, 2014; SA 2014 c4]
- 9 Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014 (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 484 (Apr. 16, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 520-21 (Apr. 17, 2014 aft.), 544-59 (Apr. 22, 2014 aft.), 625-31 (Apr. 23, 2014 aft.), 638-57 (Apr. 23, 2014 eve., adjourned on amendment)
- 10 Employment Pension (Private Sector) Plans Amendment Act, 2014 (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 484-85 (Apr. 16, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 522 (Apr. 17, 2014 aft.), 559 (Apr. 22, 2014 aft.), 580-96 (Apr. 22, 2014 eve., passed on division)
- 11 Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014 (Bhullar)**  
First Reading -- 541 (Apr. 22, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 623-25 (Apr. 23, 2014 aft.), 673-79 (Apr. 24, 2014 aft., adjourned)
- 201 Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014 (Kubinec)**  
First Reading -- 63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 123-34 (Mar. 10, 2014 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship)
- 202 Independent Budget Officer Act (Forsyth)**  
First Reading -- 63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 264-79 (Mar. 17, 2014 aft., defeated on division)
- 203 Childhood Vision Assessment Act (Jablonski)**  
First Reading -- 249 (Mar. 13, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 352-61 (Apr. 7, 2014 aft.), 444-50 (Apr. 14, 2014 aft., passed)
- 204 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (MLA Public Interest Fee Waiver) Amendment Act, 2014 (Barnes)**  
First Reading -- 263-64 (Mar. 17, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 450-52 (Apr. 14, 2014 aft., adjourned)
- 205 Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Distress and Neglect) Amendment Act, 2014 (Webber)**  
First Reading -- 417 (Apr. 10, 2014 aft., passed)
- Pr1 Rosebud School of the Arts Amendment Act, 2014 (Hale)**  
First Reading -- 609 (Apr. 23, 2014 aft., passed)
- Pr2 Maskwachees Cultural College Amendment Act, 2014 (Calahasen)**  
First Reading -- 609 (Apr. 23, 2014 aft., passed)





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