



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 7, 2014

Issue 26a

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Second Session

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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
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Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),
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Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W),
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Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
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Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 58 Wildrose: 17 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 3

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 7, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Hon. Members: Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. [applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members, and my grandson Joshua Thomas thanks you.

Prayers

The Speaker: Now let us pray. In doing so, let us turn our attention to life itself, not only to our own lives but to the lives of those with whom we interact daily and others whom we represent as part of our elected duty in this Assembly. Through this prayer let us strengthen our resolve to help improve the lives of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly His Excellency Dr. Tuncay Babali, who is the ambassador of the Republic of Turkey. His Excellency is accompanied by Mr. Ali Riza Güney, who is the consul general of Turkey in Toronto, and Mr. Süleyman Candemir, Turkish commercial counsellor at the consulate general of Turkey in Toronto.

Alberta and the Republic of Turkey benefit from a strong trade and investment relationship. Ambassador Babali's visit is a great opportunity for us to explore new areas of co-operation in a variety of sectors, particularly in the areas of responsible energy development and agriculture. We are confident that the future will bring tremendous opportunities for our continued collaboration in trade and investment but also for cultural exchanges and other mutually beneficial partnerships.

Our esteemed guests are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Let us begin with school groups, starting with Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of young individuals from my constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. Accompanied by some parents and teachers from one of my favourite schools, the Barrhead elementary school, is a group of remarkable and bright young students. Our teachers today are Mr. Brent Wierenga, Mr. Dale Erickson, Mr. Laurin Lamothe, Miss Chrissie Epp, Miss Muriel Laffitte along with teacher aides Rita Van Roodselaar, who is a friend, Denise Degner, and Anita Sloat. We have helper Miss Jazmin Chilito.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take the opportunity to introduce a very special young lady to the group, Olivia Walker. Olivia, could you stand? She is here today to visit the Legislature,

and I am so proud to introduce her. She is the granddaughter of my constituency manager, Audrey Neuman. Oddly enough to my colleagues and myself, she has taken an interest in politics and may one day aspire to be a politician.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all the students to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to this august Legislature St. Anthony's school from my diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. They are here today under the charge of Ms Michelle Fournier, who is also accompanied by eight local parents and 26 of the best and brightest students from St. Anthony's school in Drumheller. I would like them to please rise and accept the warm traditional welcome of this Alberta Chamber.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?

If not, let us move on with other important guests, starting with the Associate Minister of Wellness.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to introduce Alberta's chief medical officer of health, Dr. James Talbot. Dr. Talbot attended the medical school at the University of Toronto in 1981 and had the wisdom to return to this great province just 10 years later. Dr. Talbot is an exceptional ambassador for the medical profession, with the distinct privilege of protecting the health of Albertans whom he has never even met. He does great work, and I encourage all members to read his recent letter to the editor commemorating Immunization Awareness Week. Jim is an invaluable advocate for wellness and an active member of his community, volunteering the precious little spare time he has to coach hockey and soccer. Dr. Talbot and I launched Canada's only comprehensive strategic approach to wellness recently, and together we will be kicking off a wellness engagement and action plan soon. We are incredibly fortunate to have Dr. Talbot serving the people of Alberta. I would ask that he now please rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce an intrepid young Albertan, Brian Senio, who began his career in government as a caucus researcher in 2012 after receiving his undergraduate degree in political economy at Concordia University College of Alberta. Last year he became the special assistant to the Health minister and hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and this past December he became my executive assistant. Born and raised in Edmonton, Brian is a very proud Albertan, who brings a blue-collar work ethic to the office every day. He's embraced an active lifestyle since his childhood, growing up playing football and hockey. He's also an avid outdoorsman, who likes to fish and camp every weekend he can during the summer. He's the ultimate team player, and I'm very happy to have him as my right-hand man in Wellness. I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me now in giving Brian the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you the most important person in my life, my wife, Kärin Olson. [applause] I think they have some appreciation for what she has to put up with. She's the mother of our two grown boys and grandmother to our young grandson, she's a professor of

nursing at the University of Alberta, and she has always supported me in my career. She has knocked on thousands of doors in nine campaigns, and she believed enough in me to let me quit my job as a transit operator in order to run for Edmonton city council. She took a real chance, but it paid off. I couldn't have done what I have without her. I would ask her to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Welcome, and thank you for sharing.

The hon. Minister of Health, followed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Assembly Dr. Barry Bultz, president of the International Psycho-Oncology Society, and Dan Brennan, who sits on the board of the society. They are both seated in the members' gallery.

Dr. Bultz and Mr. Brennan are here today to mark mental health awareness week and, as well, to draw attention to the work of the International Psycho-Oncology Society. The society is committed to integrating the practice of psycho-oncology into mainstream cancer care and creating international awareness of a made-in-Alberta innovation called the sixth vital sign. This is a tool used to measure the emotional distress of cancer patients. To date, 75 influential societies and organizations around the world have endorsed emotional distress as the sixth vital sign after temperature, pulse, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and pain. As we are all much too aware, Mr. Speaker, cancer takes the lives of many Albertans. It's a significant emotional and financial burden for them and for our province.

I'm very proud to have both gentlemen in the House today. I'd ask them to rise and receive our traditional warm welcome.

1:40

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, followed by the leader of the Liberal opposition.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly today Kourtney Pratt, who is just joining my office now, with the student ministerial intern program here at the Legislature. I'm particularly proud of this recent acquisition of Kourtney because she is from my constituency. She grew up in Camrose. She attended the University of Calgary and has a degree, interestingly, in political science and dance. Maybe she can teach me some moves. I don't know. She's already had some very interesting experiences in her young career. She has been an intern with a public consultation organization in Toronto, and she's also been an intern at the embassy of Canada in Washington, DC. She's going to be attending law school in the fall. She's seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition, followed by the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Lori Feist. Lori owns Seanaa Services Ltd., a company which helps other companies fill vacancies for skilled labour. She finds the right person for the right job and, in doing so, helps keep our economy running and improves the lives of Albertans who want meaningful employment. Lori does this

admirably. She's a member of the West Edmonton Business Association and lives in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. I would ask Lori to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly another constituent, Hector Marois, who is accompanied by his lovely wife, Jean, and their family. Last week Hector received the Governor General's caring Canadian award. Hector has volunteered over 15,000 hours over 26 years for unit 9Y, a short-term palliative care unit at the Covenant Health Edmonton General continuing care centre. He helps distribute breakfast trays and feeds patients who are suffering. He takes on the orientation of newly arrived families and patients. He helps educate them as to the services available to them, and at Christmas he and his lovely wife, Jean, are Mr. and Mrs. Claus to the whole hospital. In the summer he takes a two-week break to serve as a volunteer director at a camp for senior citizens. Hector is an amazing man and a model for all of us. I would ask Hector, his wife, Jean, and all of his family to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, all members of this House know that this week is North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, and it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an occupational health and safety team working to make Alberta workplaces safe and healthy for all of us. With us today, sitting in the galleries, are Ann Laing, Emma Boyd, Stephanie Morrison, Lewinda Knowles, Habiba Mohamad, Celia Chiang, Lisa Ross-Rodriguez, Gene Ozon, Matthew Rogerson, and from MacEwan University's public relations program, working right now in the ministry for her practicum, Allison Bignell. I would ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy, followed by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Eight more introductions, so let's keep it moving, folks.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my intern, Eric Wagner, who is joining us here this summer. Eric is enrolled at the University of Calgary in the bachelor of commerce program. I'm really looking forward to Eric joining our team in the office. I'd ask Eric to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two people who I'm pleased to know, Chelsea Hawrelak, originally from Camrose, now from Edmonton, as well as Sergeant Vickey Hulm. This week marks Missing Persons Week, and Chelsea is a victims support worker with the Kare unit, an investigational unit with the RCMP that focuses on the deaths of high-risk missing persons from all parts of Alberta and the Territories. Sergeant Hulm is the sergeant for missing persons within Kare. The Kare unit investigates all leads and assists in the capture and prosecution of the people responsible for these crimes. Chelsea has been nominated to receive a community justice award for community mobilization thanks to her dedicated efforts. She also works with the Kare proactive team to register sex workers and their involvement in high-risk lifestyles. Additionally, she

works closely with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, and Métis child and family services.

I had the opportunity to meet with both of them earlier today to talk about the important work the Kare unit does for missing persons and the support that they provide to all victims. I'd ask them both to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Your guests are not here?

Let's go on with Lacombe-Ponoka, then.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ann Craft. Ann is a well-respected and very successful real estate agent in central Alberta who has been practising her craft for 19 years and is very proficient at her craft, hence her name. She is here today for answers to why sour crude produced water was allowed to be delivered to her property instead of potable water. Ann, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have an additional introduction of two individuals seated in the public gallery, my principal secretary, Adrienne King, and my executive assistant, Amy Lambe. Their good humour and lots of patience and strong organizational backgrounds have managed to keep me mostly on task and focused most of the time. I appreciate very much the work that they have done for me in the last year or two. I would like the Assembly to recognize them. If they'd please stand and receive the traditional welcome.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Stephen Vincent. Stephen is joining our office through the summer internship program. In just the few days he's been here, I can tell that he's a huge asset to our office. Now, Steve is just beginning his poli-sci degree, but he has a long career as a musician, even playing with rock legend Jon Bon Jovi. On a more personal note, though, I'd like to thank Steve because he played at the fundraising event in 2011 for the Slave Lake disaster, and he did a great job helping to raise funds.

He's accompanied by Kathleen Range, who is my press secretary, Mr. Speaker, who was there through the floods last summer, that devastated so many people in so many communities. She was there every moment, sacrificing her family time in order to help Albertans. Like so many public servants, she continued to sacrifice and serve Albertans, especially in their time of need. On behalf of Albertans I'd like to thank you for that, Kathleen.

I'd ask both of them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Airdrie and Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the

Legislative Assembly Ms Huguette Hébert, her daughter Anita Rudichuk, and Shauna McHarg. All three of these people represent families who've been banned from facilities while they advocate for their loved ones in continuing care and long-term care. They're here today hoping to get a meeting with the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Seniors. They're hoping to bring awareness to a serious issue facing many Alberta families.

1:50

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to rise today on behalf of my dear friend the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and her wonderful husband, Gord. Gord is a long-time member of the Calgary Millennium Rotary Club. Calgary Millennium does an incredible job of impacting lives in the community, and today I have the pleasure of introducing one of those lives that has been impacted. Doris Weidling is a youth exchange student from Hamburg, Germany. She arrived in Canada last August and will head home later this summer. During her exchange she has visited many great locations around Alberta. She is an accomplished seamstress. She is very excited to participate in her school graduation, and at that grad she will unveil a dress that she has made by herself. She is a true ambassador of goodwill and the Rotary spirit. All of this would not be possible without the dedication of Rotarians, and to them I say thank you. Today Doris is joined by Rotarian Heather Anderson Cortis, who some of you may remember from her years of service on staff here at the Assembly. I'd ask that they both rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my guests, Keith Purdy and Richard Kennedy. Keith and Richard are here today to observe the long-overdue amendments being made to the Marriage Act of Alberta. They both have a long history of fighting for marriage equality in this province. In early 2000 Keith and Richard were part of the human rights campaign to have same-sex couples declared families in the eyes of the health care system. During the Klein years they fought in co-operation with Egale Canada against the use of the notwithstanding clause, and only 30 days after the law changed, they married in 2005. I'd now ask Keith and Richard to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That concludes the list I have, but if there are others, let's tidy them up right now as well. No more introductions?

Tribute to the Hon. Brian Mason Leader of the New Democratic Opposition

The Speaker: Hon. members, you'll notice by the clock that I have taken some liberties today with the schedule. In fact, this section would be reserved for ministerial statements. There are no ministerial statements today. However, based on precedent in this House, this would be the appropriate time for us to do something else that is rather unique and very special. As you know, notice has been requested so that at this time we might pay tribute from each of the caucuses, and perhaps others who might wish to join in, to one member who is retiring as an hon. leader of a particular caucus and a particular party in this Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has announced that he is resigning as leader of the New Democrat opposition effective October 19, 2014. That means that when the House normally is scheduled to convene, which would be the last Monday of October, he would return not as the leader. So this may be one of his final days as leader, and the House has indicated a desire to rise and pay tribute to him.

Before doing so, I would like to personally say thank you for 10 – dare I say it? – outstanding years of service on behalf of your constituents, hon. member. Thank you for the passion and the humour that you have brought. I wish as Speaker I could have allowed more of it to surface. However, we'll see how that goes.

Let us begin our brief tributes. Let me call upon the hon. Premier of our province to begin.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I must say that it's with a great deal of pleasure that we honour not only the service of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood as a member of the House but particularly today as the leader of the New Democrat opposition. As well, it's with a great deal of pleasure that he's announced his retirement because he is a very effective leader in this House, and he has served very, very well. Now, of course, I'm being facetious when I say that we should celebrate his retirement from that position because in essence it makes the House work really well when you have good leadership on all sides. I would say that the service of the hon. member has been such that he has helped this House work really well during his term of leadership.

One of the things that the hon. member, I think, understands better than many is that you can have disagreement with respect to policy, you can have intensity in your discussion, but you can do it in a very respectful, most of the time, and intense way, and you can still be friends in doing it. I would like to say – and I hope he nods when I say it – that I have had the privilege of being his friend since our university days. People have heard the stories about how he got cheap rent in our fraternity house. Always one looking for a bargain.

I must say that we have over the years had the opportunity to spar on public policy issues and on strategies and process. I used to tease him about being a Communist, and he used to react appropriately. He said nasty things about me as well, but we always did it in good humour. I think I can recall in university, when we ran campaigns or at least worked on campaigns, him campaigning in favour of the National Union of Students and me leading the campaign against the National Union of Students at the University of Alberta campus. That privilege of being on the opposite side of intense and important debates has been extant ever since.

The hon. member has brought wit and humour to debate. He has been able to take the intensity of debate and soften it with a good jab, a good comment, something that brings a little levity to it, and that has always enhanced our debates. So, Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of privilege that I have the opportunity on behalf of our caucus to say thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for the service that he has provided to Albertans and to this House.

I would be remiss if I didn't also say thank you to Karin. I think the reaction of the House was evident in terms of that we know just exactly how much she has put up with over the years. I'm not so sure that for some of those doors she was knocking on that she wasn't actually looking for him to try to drag him home. I'm not sure that she would agree that he actually improved their quality of life by getting a job in politics as opposed to what he could have earned in his previous job.

Nonetheless, the whole family – because family is important in this job, and all of us in this House know what a sacrifice it is for our families. We choose to put ourselves in the public eye, and sometimes that's not as pleasant as it might be, but it's our families who wear it. It's our families who feel it. It's our families who hurt when the arrows are cast, and they don't often get the good parts of it, the satisfaction of knowing when we've moved something, when we've accomplished something. But they do get the comments. They do read the papers. They do hear the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” I do think that in saying thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for the contribution he's made, it is quite appropriate to acknowledge and say thank you to his whole family – his wife and his two sons and his extended family – because a commitment from a leader is a commitment from the whole family. It's a commitment which makes this province better and has made this province better.

I guess the only sad note is that he will still be bringing his humour to the debates in the House; he will still be annoying us with his persistent comments. But on the positive side he will still be adding to the quality of debate, the quality of public policy in this province, and the quality of life in this province.

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tremendously honoured to stand up on behalf of the Official Opposition this afternoon to honour my friend and colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Just to give you an idea of how well liked he is on our side, I had to arm-wrestle the Member for Airdrie and the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for the privilege of giving this speech today.

Mr. Speaker, the member's service to his party, his constituents, and his province has been truly exemplary. His leadership was always a reminder to me that politics is about people, standing up for people who otherwise wouldn't have a voice. He can leave his position as leader of the NDP knowing that his hard work, his courage, and his tireless advocacy has made a real difference in the lives of many Albertans, and I know he will take great pride in that.

Travelling the province with a person has a way of forging a bond, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly what he and I did last fall. Throughout September and October we debated each other at postsecondary campuses around the province. There were no holds barred. I talked about climate change and poverty, he talked about oil sands development and lowering taxes, and I loved every minute of it. The response we got was tremendous, to the point that we had to add debates at the request of other campuses and actually had to turn down some other requests because we were just too busy. During our debates I got to see what has endeared him to Albertans over the course of his distinguished career: a depth of knowledge, quick humour, and an unwavering commitment to his principles and his constituents.

2:00

Oftentimes I'd get strategic with him, and I'd grill him about being too hard on us. I tried to reason with him that by attacking us too hard, it simply drives more votes to the Progressive Conservatives. His reply was always the same: if you're wrong on something, you're going to hear it from me.

The member was also something of a mentor – some might say a sergeant; others might say a sensei – for my colleagues new to the cut and thrust of being the opposition in the Legislature. I would be remiss if I didn't thank him on behalf of the members

for Airdrie and Calgary-Fish Creek for his assistance and support on their decision to cross the floor to the opposition benches. As new opposition MLAs I know that they valued his perspective and his advice on adjusting to their new roles.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sad the hon. member will no longer lead the NDP, I'm sad I won't see him on the campaign trail, but I am incredibly grateful for the time that he has graciously given me and for the friendship we have developed.

From all your supporters in the Wildrose Official Opposition, all the best, Brian.

The Speaker: On behalf of the Alberta Liberal caucus, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Alberta Liberal caucus it is a pleasure to rise to recognize and honour the departure from leadership of my eminent colleague of nine years from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Though still a young man at 60, he's a man of no little wisdom, as I've discovered sitting just to the right of him in the Legislature. He has a broad and deep knowledge of both progressive public policy and the human psyche, and he continues to champion the interests of working people.

I liked this man so much that I tried as Leader of the Official Opposition to work with him. He spurned me, and we are still friends. Known by many in the House as the fastest lip in the Leg., he has distinguished himself beyond his satirical quips as a substantive and effective critic of government hyperbole and hypocrisy. Nor is he averse to colourful shots across the bow, as the hon. Speaker frequently chides us all for. His oft-repeated quip after opening prayer in the House is, "God save the government," a distinguishing feature, as is his unapologetic adherence to his party principles and positions.

To be fair, Brian has also occasionally stepped beyond his comfort zone to co-operate with the Alberta Liberals on common goals. Not only is he effective in debate and repartee in question period; much to my envy, he was an early adopter of the new technology, now old, called Facebook and Twitter. No doubt he's now into the nether reaches of Tumblr, Snapchat, and Vine, whatever they are.

For 25 years he has represented the people of Edmonton either at the city or provincial level and has gained the respect of colleagues across the political spectrum, his faithful constituents, and possibly even some from the union movement. Political rivalries aside, this is a man of principle, deeply committed to social justice. He has made and I have no doubt will continue to make extraordinary contributions to the public interest long term. It has been my privilege along with my Liberal colleagues to work with and learn from his leadership.

On behalf of this caucus our best wishes, Brian, in your next roles, and may your voice and values continue to sting those who do not hold fast to the long-term public interest of this great province and its people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

Noting the time, I've received notes from the members for Calgary-Varsity, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and Calgary-Foothills, who wish to extend their particular kudos to you in writing to you personally, sir. They will be doing that immediately.

In the meantime let us conclude this round, unless there's anyone else with a burning passion to speak, by inviting the hon. leader of the . . .

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: In conclusion, as I was saying, I would now invite the hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition to make his comments in response.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I thought you were moving right on to question period.

I did want to thank all members of the House and yourself as well as our table officers and the pages for a wonderful association, which is going to continue for at least a couple of years. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as leader of Alberta's NDP and to make so many wonderful friendships across the aisle. I'd like to thank my caucus as well for their wonderful support.

Now, when I left city council to run for this position as an MLA, some of the most enthusiastic backers were my opponents on city council. The mayor was so excited that I was going on to provincial politics, and I get a little sense of that from the Premier as well.

I would like to thank the Premier. We have had a long friendship, going back to our university days, Mr. Speaker. I remember the frat house that I boarded in. You know, I was considerably less moderate in my university days than I am today, I might say, as probably were the Premier and some of his cohorts. But I was invited to move in, and I did because it was affordable for me. Then I discovered, to my horror, that it was the Tory frat on campus and that I was the after-dinner entertainment. It certainly helped prepare me for this place as well. I would like to thank the Premier, and I'm very pleased that he has the opportunity to be the Premier even if it is just for a few months. I think that that is a wonderful opportunity for him, and I congratulate him very much on that and thank him for his kind words.

Now, the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has, as she said, become a good friend, and we did, I think, enjoy ourselves immensely on the eight debates that we had around the province at different campuses. Not to be immodest, but of the eight, I managed to win five, one was a draw, and she won two. So if anyone would like some tips on debating the Leader of the Opposition in the next election, you know, for a fee we could talk about it. She's been a very effective leader.

I did enjoy helping some of the people who crossed the floor to the opposition, who had been cabinet ministers, to survive without servants. They had to do everything for themselves. I know it was quite a shock, but they seem to have adjusted very well.

To the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View: I appreciate very much your words as well. I think that with respect to your offer to co-operate, it was more like a merger or a joining of some kind, so it's nothing personal, as you know. But I am pleased that our working relationship with the Liberals has improved considerably . . .

Dr. Swann: Since I left.

Mr. Mason: Well, you're not trying to take us over anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member is a man of great principle, and that was evident in his public statements and actions before he ever got into politics. I did go and see him, before he ran as an MLA, to try and persuade him to run in the New Democratic Party, and unfortunately Kevin Taft had beaten me to his house by about two weeks. I regret that, but I appreciate very much the chance that we've had to work together, and we'll continue.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be around for at least two more years as an MLA if the government sticks to its law on election timing.

We don't know. I'll have lots of opportunities to interact with people and to continue my friendship and my work on behalf of my constituents. I want to thank the entire House for this day. I do very much appreciate it. [Standing ovation]

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you.

Thank you, all, for participating. I'd just bring to your attention that another hon. member of this House, who was the leader of the government caucus, will be recognized at a mutually agreeable time in the not-too-distant future, just so that you're aware. Thank you for the notes regarding that particular question.

Let us move on.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: You are reminded that you have 35 seconds for a question and 35 seconds for an answer.

Let us start with the first official question from the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Premier's Office Expense Oversight

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, today in Public Accounts we were treated to quite a spectacle. The Deputy Minister of Executive Council was reporting on the processes for overseeing expenses in the Premier's department. It turns out there aren't any. This deputy minister is the top bureaucrat in government, the head of the committee of all deputy ministers, and the top adviser to the Premier. Basically, he told us that the rules don't apply to the Premier's office. He certainly wasn't going to be the one to tell the Premier that a suggested course of action might break the rules. Does the Premier believe this is how the province should be run?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier is the head of that particular office and needs to be responsible for the expenses that are incurred in that particular office, just as a minister is responsible for the expenses that are incurred in a minister's office. The Deputy Minister of Executive Council is, in essence, the head civil servant and is not responsible for the minister's expenses or the Premier's expenses in that particular office. Having said that, I think, you know, it's not particularly appropriate for me to comment on what may have been said at a committee meeting this morning that I was not at and have not been privy to.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we asked the deputy minister about hiring and severance policies for senior people both within his department and across the government. There is no willingness to enforce rules or set a high standard from the top. What is clear is that the top bureaucrats aren't going to cross the Premier and the cabinet when they break the rules on all sorts of issues like hiring staff, travelling first class, or building a sky palace. Why is it that this Premier and this government won't even follow the rules that they themselves created?

Mr. Hancock: This Premier and this government very definitely will follow the rules that they've created. This Premier and this government are looking at the whole issue of severance policy and salaries, and we will be examining that and coming out with a very definite severance policy and salary policy with respect to political staff. We have already referred and the previous Premier referred the issue of expense policy to the Auditor General to review our travel and expense policy, using the Premier's office as an example with respect to how you investigate it. So we are

looking at ensuring how we can do a better job of adhering to the policies and making sure that we have the right policies.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we know that government and cabinet rules weren't followed when it came to hiring the Premier's chief of staff and communications advisers. They weren't followed when it came to booking first-class flights for the Premier and ministers or for using government airplanes. They certainly weren't followed when the last Premier ordered new furniture on the same day that the Finance minister said that we should all tighten our belts. Will the Premier at least admit that he owes Albertans many, many, many more apologies?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I made a speech to about 1,300 Albertans and through them to every Albertan, at which time I said that we will do a much, much better job of adhering to the policies and processes that we have in place and reviewing them to make sure that we have the right policies and processes in place. It's absolutely important for Albertans, as we look forward to try and develop the policies, to try and do the things that are necessary to create a place for our grandchildren, and to have the kind of Alberta that we want with the quality of life that we want, the kind of quality of life that's attracting thousands of people to this province, that we take care of the things that help build and maintain the trust that we need to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second main set of questions.

Government Communications

Ms Smith: Yesterday I referred to a company called Navigator in two of my questions. Now, Navigator is a friend of the governing party and of Premiers past, present, and future. They're currently running the presumptive leadership campaign of Jim Prentice. They ran the last Premier's election campaign. Yesterday this Premier said that Navigator got a rich, untendered, sole-sourced flood contract because of unique skills. To the Premier: what unique skills did Navigator bring to the government that weren't available among the 200-odd very highly paid communication specialists that they already employ?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, as is her wont, the hon. member chooses one half of the answer rather than the other half. What I said is that when you sole source under government policy, it's either because of an emergency situation or unique skills. The flood, of course, was an emergency situation, which anybody ought to have been able to determine. In an emergency situation, where you need to get all hands on deck and assemble your team of people immediately, you go to people that you know and you trust who have a reputation for doing the job. I wasn't part of sole sourcing that contract, but I presume that those were the types of things that went into that kind of a decision at that time.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, they have 200 people working in their communications department. What is their job?

The former Infrastructure minister just said today that he wouldn't hire anyone who works on his campaign if he becomes Premier. What a great idea because Navigator never seems to have trouble landing contracts to give advice to this government. Senior political staffers move back and forth between Navigator, the government, and the PC Party all the time, but when you peruse the list of government employees, you find communications advisers, policy advisers, and executive advisers. Why does this government have to keep hiring Navigator?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, as particular ministers or ministries address issues of importance to Albertans, I would believe that they would seek out the people that they need to do the best job possible. In an emergency situation sometimes you don't have the luxury of putting out an RFP and having a three-month process. So you might go to people that have a reputation in the area for issues management, have the skill sets and are known to have the skill sets, have a reputation in the community, and you might hire them in an emergent situation. I would assume that that's the circumstance under which Navigator was hired with respect to response to the floods.

Ms Smith: Great to have friends in high places, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Human Services minister credited Navigator with helping him put together his children at risk symposium, although members of the media commented about how poorly run that event was. The Human Services ministry has 25 communications people. They have dozens of people with "policy" or "adviser" in their title. They even had someone whose title was: team lead for organizational storytelling. With all of these advisers, spinners, and storytellers why do they keep hiring Navigator?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, Human Services, I know from experience, is a very large department with a lot of issues at hand, a lot of issues to be taken care of on a day-to-day basis, a lot of communication actually that has to be done. When you talk about communications people in a department, they're not all sitting around waiting for another event to happen. They are actually engaged on a day-to-day basis in making sure that Albertans have the information that they need to live their lives, to access government programs, to do what is necessary as a result of the circumstances that they find themselves in. There are a lot of people employed by this government to serve Albertans, and sometimes you need a few more.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Third and final set of questions. The hon. leader.

Disaster Recovery Program Administration

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked some questions about the disaster recovery program, and the Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs made some startling comments. He said that LandLink had done a good job. Now, I can tell you that there are thousands of Albertans whose eyebrows went up when he said that. He is the minister responsible for the disaster recovery program. He has to know that Albertans are despairing at the conduct of LandLink. Does he really believe that they've done a good job?

The Speaker: The hon. minister responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, last June the largest event that ever hit Canada happened, and we were all overwhelmed. So was LandLink. They had a small staff to help us through disaster relief, and they helped us to staff up to deal with this. They did the very best that they could under some very trying situations. We moved very quickly to support people in this province, and LandLink has helped. It hasn't all been smooth, but we've all worked together to meet the needs of Albertans.

2:20

Ms Smith: While the Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs was shockingly singing the praises of LandLink, he also admitted, and

he just did again, that they weren't ready for a major flood. Mr. Speaker, LandLink has had the contract for managing disaster relief programs since 1995. The fact that they had no plan for a major flood is nothing to make excuses about. LandLink has received millions and millions for mismanaging disaster programs, at least \$18 million in this event so far. If they weren't responsible for having a plan on how to handle a major crisis, who was responsible?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a very talented group at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency that does work not only with LandLink but with our municipalities and our communities in any disaster. Whether it's the Slave Lake fires or whether it's a flood, we move and work with our municipalities, with our other partners. LandLink was a part of that process that helped us to deliver those DRP processes during those events, small floods, small events. We've never had anything like this in the past. It was a huge undertaking, with 10,000 homes impacted, and we've done a great job with it.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, these comments are particularly concerning because they appear to suggest a change in attitude on the part of government towards LandLink. The last Municipal Affairs minister made it clear in his answer that LandLink's days were numbered. Yesterday this minister crowed that they could just stick the federal government with the bill for LandLink's mismanagement. Will the minister commit that LandLink will never be given another contract to manage future disaster recovery programs?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've said in this House many times that LandLink has been extended for one year to complete the files on this process. We've already started a new process to look at how we're going to deal with disasters in the future, how we're going to man up for them, what the process is going to be, who might provide support for us. We're working through that process as we speak.

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

Task Force for Teaching Excellence Report

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's Education Week. Despite chronic underfunding and overcrowded classrooms, Alberta has one of the best education systems in the world thanks to our outstanding and dedicated teachers. In fact, the ATA is viewed as one of the pre-eminent educational organizations in the world. Yet if implemented, the recommendations from the Task Force for Teaching Excellence would divide and threaten to break up the ATA if it doesn't submit to the Education minister's demands. To the Premier: are you going to let your minister get away with bullying teachers, principals, and the Alberta Teachers' Association?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the minister is not doing any of those things, and neither does the report do what the hon. member said. In fact, if we adopted all of the recommendations of the report, we would not be breaking up the ATA into a union and a professional organization. The report specifically says that we should accommodate the outcomes that are desired under the report without doing that. It only adds

surplusage to say that if you can't do it without doing that, then you should go on to do it. The outcomes of the layout and the process to get there distinctly suggest that it's better to do it with the ATA as the professional organization and the union.

The Speaker: Thank you.

First supplemental. The hon. leader.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, thank you. The Premier has just proven my point: if you don't listen, we're going to bully you.

The government has set up a task force which it claims is arm's length and free from political interference, yet every single member of the task force is directly appointed by the minister, and just to make sure they get the results that they want, they have appointed four PC MLAs to keep watch, not a single rep from the ATA. To the Premier: how can a board hand-picked by the PCs and overseen by the PCs possibly be free of interference from the PCs?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not understand governance. The fact of the matter is that the task force has given its report, and the minister has indicated that the report is now out for public discussion. We have not adopted the recommendations of the report. When the public input comes back from the associations that he's talked about and others, it will go to the TDPAC, which is a committee that's set up between the ATA and government to talk about teacher professional development. So it is a process that's independent of the minister, independent of government. It has made its report, with items for important discussion for the public, and that's what's going to happen now.

Dr. Sherman: Premier, recommendation 25 says that if the ATA doesn't play ball, they're going to divide and conquer the ATA.

Mr. Speaker, the real problems in our public education system are too few teachers, too few supports for the teachers we do have, and too few schools. It seems to me that this government and this report are forgetting the most basic fact. A chronically underfunded school system with overcrowded classrooms is not optimal. Premier, instead of attacking your teachers, why don't you support them for a change by providing adequate, sustainable, predictable . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think I have a pretty good reputation for not attacking teachers and for supporting teachers. I also have a very good reputation for understanding that we have to put our children first, and that means making sure that we have excellent teachers for every student. Excellence in teaching is fundamental to a good education system. We have excellent teachers, and that's why we have a good education system. Any government worth its salt should be looking forward and saying: how do we continue to maintain, build, and grow excellence in the system, and how do we deal with those chronic problems that you have in any system? That's what the task force report is about.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Health Care Budget Oversight

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government has presented legislation that will give the Minister of

Health the authority to approve Alberta Health Services' \$12 billion budget. Some might find this an improvement over the board of AHS doing it, but it overlooks a fundamental democratic principle. Since the Magna Carta generations have fought and sometimes died to ensure that the people's elected representatives have control over taxation and government budgets. To the Premier: do you believe in the right of the Assembly to approve the government's budget, including the Health budget, and if so, why are you giving this power to your Health minister?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that must be another one of those humour moments that we were just talking about.

Obviously, the Legislative Assembly approves the Health budget, as it does every budget of government. Obviously, the Legislative Assembly has oversight on the spending of the public's money. Within the Health budget, which is allocated by this Assembly, the Minister of Health works under the prescribed lines that have been approved. One of those lines is the budget for Alberta Health Services, and it's the minister's job to have oversight on that budget after it's been approved by the government.

The Speaker: First supplemental. The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is a joke, and here's the punch line. The budget of AHS is a quarter of this government's entire budget, yet the budget for AHS that we see in this Assembly is only six lines. Six numbers, Minister, for \$12 billion. Albertans expect their elected representatives to scrutinize government budgets and expenditures, but this government has done an end run around democracy. To the Premier: will you pull Bill 12 and introduce legislation that will ensure the Assembly's oversight of the \$12 billion Health Services budget, and if not, why not?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, Bill 12 does nothing to change the oversight of this Legislature on the spending of public money, nothing whatsoever. What it does do is give the minister more direct oversight on the grants that have been provided to Alberta Health Services with respect to how they allocate those resources within Alberta Health Services. That is not a change from the oversight of this Legislature or the Treasury Board, for that matter, with respect to public funds. In fact, I'm surprised by the hon. member's questions. I understand that two members of his caucus voted for this just yesterday.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. We'll have more to say about it later.

This is to the Health minister. Home-care workers at Artspace co-op are being paid poverty-level wages with no benefits. They're mostly new Canadians, all women, and are going on strike today. Their employer says that they do not receive enough provincial funding to provide a raise or benefits. Will the Minister of Health agree to review the contract with the Artspace home-care board, Supports for Artspace Independent Living, to ensure that they do have enough funds to provide their workers with a living wage?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly agree with the hon. member that we need to make sure that home-care workers in this province are paid fair wages and do have working conditions that enable them to do what they want to do, which is care for Albertans who require it. I am not going to comment on this specific set

of negotiations. Obviously, I don't want to pre-empt those negotiations, nor will I interfere with them. But I will certainly tell the hon. member that we're monitoring this situation closely. We recognize the very difficult and valuable work that home-care workers do, and we trust that this will be resolved very quickly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

No more preambles, please, to supplementals. Let's start with Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Stony Plain.

2:30 Educational Curriculum Redesign

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, thank you. The Task Force for Teaching Excellence has recommended a more formalized approach to teacher evaluation and accountability. The Wildrose has always been and will always be in favour of transparency and accountability. However, we also know that the PC curriculum rewrite toward discovery learning is being met with harsh criticism from many, many teachers. To the Education minister: how can we be assured that these new accountability methods aren't just your heavy-handed way of intimidating teachers into accepting your misguided project in our classrooms?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the hon. member doesn't seem to want to understand is that it's outcomes that are important, that curricular standards set what children need to learn and what is expected at certain levels during the education process, and that teachers have responsibility for the pedagogy, ensuring that each student learns in the way that that student can learn best and is excited about coming to school and excited about completing. The assessment of a teacher with respect to their ability would and should be done on the basis of how they engage their students in the learning process. That's the importance of excellence in education. That's what excellence in teaching is all about.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, I would agree that outcomes are important in government also, and that's why we need a new one.

Albertans expect teachers, like everybody else, to be accountable, but this government shouldn't be forcing it's heavy-handed approach on them. Premier, will you admit that this task force is nothing more than a way for your centralized-planning government to force teachers to do what you and your educators want? Isn't it just a way to threaten teachers into teaching discovery learning as you want them to?

Mr. Hancock: You know, Mr. Speaker, there's an old saying when you're a hammer, everything is a nail. This guy appears to be a bit of a hammer on this because he doesn't seem to understand. He doesn't seem to understand the difference between curriculum and teaching pedagogy. He doesn't seem to understand what it takes to keep children excited about coming to school. He doesn't seem to understand that Alberta is not a place like China, where they do 16 hours of homework in math alone in order to achieve the outcomes that they have. He doesn't understand that we have different ways of teaching different students because students have different ways of learning.

Mr. McAllister: What I and thousands of Albertans understand is that the Premier is not the sharpest tool in the shed.

Mr. Speaker, given that parents, students, and academic experts are all speaking about the turmoil that this government is causing our kids in the classroom, given that many teachers are speaking out against Inspiring Education and discovery learning, doesn't the Premier see how disrespectful it is to teachers to force them to toe the line instead of just letting them do what they do best, teach our kids?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member has a really confused idea of the world because no one is forcing teachers to do anything. The task force is not talking about forcing teachers to do something. The task force is talking about some of the essential issues – teacher excellence, excellence in education leadership, and assurance – and if there's one thing that the opposition should understand, it's that you do have to have an appropriate assurance model to give people faith and trust in the system. Teachers are very important. We trust teachers. We think teachers are doing a great job in this province, but you do need to address the issues of competence and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Grizzly Bear Conservation

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's bears are awakening from hibernation, and many Albertans and visitors will be hoping to get a glimpse of these majestic and important animals. However, as iconic as our bears are, we often hear stories of them being poached or killed illegally. In fact, more grizzlies were illegally killed in 2013 than in previous years. To the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development: what is being done to protect these bears from being killed illegally?

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

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are aware that the grizzly bear mortality for this year is higher than it has been in previous years, and we know that the majority of the deaths are human-caused, so we are working with stakeholders. We're working with industry. We're looking at reducing some of the footprint, some of the roadways that we know allow people into certain areas of the province where there's grizzly habitat. We are making sure that we have significant fines in place, and we have a 24-hour report a poacher line so that people can report any problems they're finding or seeing with grizzly bears in the province.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you. The grizzly bear recovery plan lapsed more than a year ago. What can Albertans expect to see in an updated, effective plan to protect this threatened species in the future?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, within Budget 2014 we've committed more than \$1 million towards grizzly bear conservation and management programs. My department is working with stakeholders right now on a new grizzly bear recovery plan. We hope to have that out later this summer, and we will make sure that all stakeholders have a chance to comment on

the draft plan. We will continue with the plan we have in place until that new plan becomes effective.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental was answered.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Let's move on to Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Care Facility Restrictions on Family Member Visits

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The decision to seek placement for a loved one is often one of the most difficult times for a family. Knowing that your loved one can no longer manage day-to-day tasks like getting dressed, cleaning, or making dinner is painful. I know this personally. You hope the help they need is available in a care facility. Families are comforted knowing that they can see and visit family even though they've found a new home, yet the stories of Shauna McHarg and Huguette Hébert are troubling. After questioning the care of their loved ones, both have been banned from visiting their families in care facilities, and they're not the only ones. To the Associate Minister – Seniors: why are facilities allowed to punish and ban family members who question care without any explanation?

Mr. Quest: Mr. Speaker, the most important consideration in these matters is the safety and the well-being of the residents in these facilities and their staff, who work with them, and this includes ensuring that they're protected from any aggressive or inappropriate behaviour. I'm not that familiar with this case, but we do need to make sure that the well-being of the residents and the staff is paramount.

Mrs. Towle: It's surprising that he's not that familiar. It's been in the media for the last two years.

Given that it has now been two years since Shauna McHarg has seen her father and that the restrictions on visiting her mother are now in place, all with no explanation from Covenant Health – she filed a FOIP; she went to the Privacy Commissioner to find out and even the Ombudsman, and all agreed she was treated unfairly and should know – and given that Shauna has also reached out to the Seniors' Advocate, who replied to her last week, saying, "Sorry; I have no mandate to assist you with this situation," will the Associate Minister – Seniors step in and order Covenant Health to allow Shauna permanent . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Quest: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I think the member's guest may have been better served if I had known that the guests were actually going to be here today. This is the first that I've heard of it. I certainly would be willing to try and take the opportunity to have a short discussion about the matter and become more familiar with it.

I do want to make the point that these cases are extremely rare, and there are a number of different options that families have with respect to signing behaviour agreements and so on. They can also, again, take the appropriate channels.

Mrs. Towle: She's actually asked your ministry, the Minister of Health. She asked the Seniors' Advocate to arrange the meeting. The hon. member from the Liberals actually introduced her.

Given that Shauna has done everything right – she appealed the ban internally; no response. She did a FOIP to find out why she was banned; no response. She went to the Privacy Commissioner, who ordered Covenant Health to tell her why she was banned; still nothing. Given that she even went to the Ombudsman, who told her that she was being treated unfairly, when are you going to do something and help a family who's advocating for their loved one?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Associate Minister – Seniors said, we certainly have empathy for any family that is in this situation. We cannot pretend to know all of the detailed circumstances of this particular case or others. In fact, I understand that although these cases are very rare, at least one of them is currently before the courts, and I don't know if this particular case is in fact before the courts.

What I will undertake to do, Mr. Speaker, is to go back again and look at the findings that were referenced by the hon. member. I certainly support the notion that anyone who is going to face such restrictions should know the reasons why, and those should be provided by . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Workforce Employment Services

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Guedo Speaker. During this year's budget estimates committee debate the hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour announced that there would be a new student job program to replace the STEP grant, which you won't be needing for a few years yet, that many postsecondary students in Alberta had previously benefited from. My question is to the hon. minister. Given that students across Alberta are eager to hear of concrete details about this potentially exciting program, when and what can we expect from this initiative?

2:40

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me be the first one to congratulate you on your grandson.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, we do know that young people require assistance with finding employment that is relevant to their education, be it in the polytechnics or universities or colleges. I am working right now with CAUS, the Council of Alberta University Students, which is working with our department in a process of designing a new program. The STEP program was previously with Human Services. Now we're in the process of designing a new one out of this ministry.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Fenske: Thank you. To the same minister: until that program comes out, what other supports are in place to offset the elimination of the STEP program?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do have the Alberta Works offices throughout the province. There are 59 of them, I believe, that do assist all Albertans with locating employment. As we know, one thing for certain is that there is no shortage of employment in this province at all. We have the career information hotline. We have the Alberta information services website as well, that exists in this province.

What we are looking at is not only creating a program that links Albertans to jobs – that’s rather easy – but to jobs that are meaningful to their educational paths.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the hon. minister of Municipal Affairs. Given that many municipalities have relied on operational MSI funding and the STEP program in the past to operate playgrounds and seniors’ programming, what can be done to make up this shortfall?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard as we travelled around the province that, especially, smaller communities are challenged with some of these reductions. The MSI operational was really important. We’ve heard that it supports libraries and others, so we’re going to continue to work with our smaller municipalities to look at what options there might be. In the short term there are programs through Culture, like CFEP and CIP, that can help some organizations. Funding in smaller communities is critically important, and we’ll continue to work with our municipalities on it.

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

Development Hearing Participation

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The government is once again disallowing input and advice from NGO groups, like Pembina and the Alberta Wilderness Association, plus the First Nations and others on development hearings. A judge threw out the last decision because the government categorized Pembina and other NGOs as unco-operative environmentalists and instructed staff to scrutinize their applications more critically and bar them from the hearings. This is exactly what outsiders see as a deliberate disregard for environmental concerns. To the minister of the environment: why is the government repeating the same action with the same reasoning?

The Speaker: The hon. minister responsible for the environment.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. All three of the organizations, the groups that the member across the way has talked, about are valuable leaders and do bring great insight in many conversations about protecting our environment. I know that this group is interested in development decisions, but having an interest in a matter is not the same as being directly affected by that matter. The process at hand is focused on considering the concerns of those who would be directly affected, and they don’t meet the criteria.

Ms Blakeman: Well, okay. Mr. Speaker, what information would be so dangerous, so damaging to economic growth, so detrimental to all-out, never-ending, uncontrolled development that it can’t even be spoken at a hearing? Aren’t hearings formed to hear from all sources?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, we don’t run the hearing. We have a quasi-judicial board that runs those hearings.

I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, that following the judicial review we had our department address the issue raised by conducting a second and very thorough review of the statement of concern, and the review independently reached the same conclusion.

Ms Blakeman: Again to the same minister: will the minister overturn this decision to bar the opinion of people they disagree with? If he won’t listen, these folks will be driven into the waiting and welcoming arms of a U.S. Senate committee.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, again, we have a quasi-judicial board that is tasked with listening to these hearings and making decisions on who’s in front of them. I’m not about to interfere with that process.

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

Statutes Amendment Act, 2014

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A week ago this PC government apologized to party members for its failure to listen to the grassroots. Yesterday they backtracked again, this time on pension rollbacks, because they failed to listen to Albertans. It’s clear that they still don’t get it because now they plan to ram through an omnibus bill without written briefings to Assembly members and without listening to Albertans. To the Premier: how can you expect MLAs to do the job Albertans expect when you hide changes to 16 pieces of legislation until four hours before debate begins?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I categorically disagree with the member. I can tell you that the member raised one concern with me. I believe it was with the minerals amendment act. I can tell you that the minister briefed the party on April 22, so three weeks ago. I can say that we sat down and talked with the members, and I answered questions. I again answered questions in the House. We feel that these are just administrative changes, and we’re quite happy with Bill 12, and we’ll move forward.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, they’re not administrative changes. Given that the Privacy Commissioner has specifically stated that she hasn’t had enough time to fully review the part of the bill that applies to her job and given that she’s already raised preliminary concerns about whether you’ve gotten it right, to the Premier: Albertans don’t want their elected representatives to work over them; they want them to work with them. Why is your government preventing that yet again?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I read the clips this morning from the Privacy Commissioner, and I can say that the Privacy Commissioner’s comments were actually quite positive as to the changes we’re making in the health records act, especially. I have no qualms about where we’re moving forward, and I’m happy to sit down with any Albertan and discuss the merits of Bill 12.

Ms Notley: Well, you’re reading the press release as quickly as you’re reading your bill because you missed the key points. Given that transgendered advocates are saying that they were not consulted and that they are against giving this cabinet carte blanche over when and how they can have their gender acknowledged by this government and given that this matter hardly amounts to a small administrative amendment, why won’t the Premier school his House leader about the difference between a miscellaneous statutes amendment act and an omnibus bill and then do the right thing and just pull Bill 12?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about the pieces of this omnibus bill that I helped champion and, certainly, am very proud to have had constant and ongoing discussions with the LGBTQ community on this. I think what we're doing completely represents their care and concerns. I'm very happy to be able to witness what we're going to see this afternoon. Those relationships are built around mutual respect, inclusion, and acceptance. They are ongoing, and I'm very happy that in my ministry initiative I'll be dealing with them on an ongoing basis.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat, followed by St. Albert.

Calgary Film Studio

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations. After a number of years with PC promises made and PC promises broken, the Calgary film studio finally got a green light. While this is a positive step and we know that the film industry is encouraged by this, what we have heard is that in this case there are accusations that there may have been sharing of inside information and rigging of this bid. Can the minister please confirm that her proposal was created with a level playing field in mind for all bidders and that no single bidder was given preferential treatment or insider information?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary film studio is indeed a great development for Calgary and for Alberta and for economic diversification. We received seven RFPs for this film studio. It went through the proper process, and I'm proud to say that the film studio is going to be built.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, given that there were a number of groups involved in the latest RFP process, as the minister stated, and given that the minister specifically identified the heavy financial involvement of government to be detrimental to the previous project, can the minister explain why she chose the Calgary Economic Development proposal instead of others promoted by the private sector?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The original proposal had an ask of about \$16 million from the government, so the proposal of the \$5 million that went in was a very prudent way to proceed. At the end of the day, it's a partnership with the city of Calgary, with Calgary Economic Development authority, and a partnership with William F. White from Toronto as the lead tenant.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, given that there were multiple bidders for the Calgary film studio, can the minister confirm that the Calgary Economic Development proposal she chose will have the capacity to grow and meet the future needs of industry, and will the minister clear the air and make all proposals public to show Albertans that this was a fair and equal process?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the Calgary film studio will be leading here in Alberta. We know that there are lots of film, television, and digital media coming right here to Alberta. At the end of the day, we know this project is the

right fit, and it will be a great fit for Calgary, and I look forward to even more film studios being built in Alberta.

2:50

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Clerk, if you could just stop the clock momentarily. I'm looking at the clock of the day, and I'm looking at the clock for question period, realizing that we may well go beyond 3 o'clock just to finish question period. Government House Leader, if you wish to put a request forward, we'd be happy to hear it.

Mr. Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask that we extend the daily Routine past 3 o'clock.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, unanimous consent has been asked for to extend our time for the Routine beyond 3 o'clock, which likely will be necessary.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Let us get started again with both clocks, starting with St. Albert, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, my warmest congratulations to you and your family on the birth of your grandson.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Loyalty Program Prohibition for Prescription Drugs

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, based on decisions by the Alberta College of Pharmacists, as of May 1 Albertans who belong to loyalty and reward programs no longer have the opportunity to collect points when making purchases at their pharmacy. New rules related to these inducements ban pharmacists from offering incentives for prescriptions or other professional services. These changes have drawn opposition from several pharmacy chains and consumer groups. Some have characterized the college's arguments as alarmist, overblown, and disrespectful to pharmacy customers. I've heard this message from an overwhelming number of my constituents. My question is to the Minister of Health. Many Albertans spend thousands of dollars at their pharmacy each year and have . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I regret your 35 seconds have elapsed, and we must go to the answer.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly heard enough to understand the question the hon. member is asking. The short answer to the question is: no, the government will not be stepping into this issue. As I previously outlined, the law delegates the right to set standards of practice to regulated health professions in Alberta, of which the College of Pharmacists is one. It delegates the same authorities to other professions with respect to, as I said, standards of practice. These are medical or professional practice matters. They are not political matters, and it is the college and not the Legislature that sets these standards.

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, consumers have noted that they are more than capable of making their own choices. Outlining this type of decision should be left to Albertans and not the College of Pharmacists. To the same minister: will the government reconsider and have a conversation with the college about this decision?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've certainly had discussions with the college prior to them reaching this decision. They have

laid out the case for me and, I think, for all Albertans about why they think this is an issue that is important to quality of care and patient safety and is also a matter of professional ethics, so we will respect the college's right to make these decisions under the legislation that delegates this authority to them.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Final supplemental.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: stakeholders pointed to studies indicating that patients see the value in loyalty programs where these incentives have potential to encourage positive health behaviour, including obtaining immunizations, health screening services, and improving medical adherence. Minister, are you willing to actively determine whether these dissolved programs truly outweigh the benefits of having them available to patients?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect I'll remind the hon. member that this is not a consumer issue. This is an issue of health care, and it is within the purview . . .

An Hon. Member: It is a consumer issue.

Mr. Horne: It is not a consumer issue. It is within the purview of the College of Pharmacists to make this decision. The reason that patients are loyal to their pharmacists is the same reason that patients are loyal to their physicians and nurse practitioners and other health professionals. It is because of the trust that patients place in them. It is because of the ability of professionals to prescribe and deliver services that they are trained and regulated to deliver. Mr. Speaker, that is what . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Sherwood Park.

Lyme Disease Testing

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in March I asked a question on Lyme disease, where I addressed the chronic lack of support Alberta Health Services provides to Albertans with this serious disease. Lyme disease is a tick-borne disease and, when left untreated, has serious long-term health effects. Albertans have been contacting my office in desperate need for support, testing, and treatment. Will the Minister of Health apologize to Albertans for failing to ensure they have access to testing and proper treatment?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. I know a number of colleagues on all sides of the House have been contacted by constituents about testing for Lyme disease. I can tell the hon. member the same thing that I told him the last time I answered the question. The testing for Lyme disease in this province is consistent with best practices and clinical evidence that's available globally. I recognize that Albertans who may feel they have been bitten by ticks are concerned about Lyme disease. My best advice is to contact their physician or other health professional and receive . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the amount of e-mails and phone calls I have received from my constituents and Albertans all across Alberta, it has become evident that some

health care professionals are refusing to test for Lyme, and this government is forcing Albertans to pay out of pocket and travel out of country for very costly treatments. To the same minister: what progress has been made on this file since my last question, and will you today commit to meeting with myself and concerned families and patients?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly be very surprised if any Albertan could say that they were refused testing for Lyme disease in this province. There are tests that are delivered in the United States, tests that actually, I'm advised by the chief medical officer, do not adhere to the same standards and do not rely on the same clinical evidence that Canadian tests provide. I know that some patients have requested to receive the American testing, but I've been assured by the chief medical officer that the tests that we deliver in Alberta are consistent with current clinical evidence and best practice.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Final supplemental.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can refute those comments because I have testimony from patients right here that have been refused.

Given that this is clearly an issue affecting many Albertans and given that other governments, both federal and provincial, are already considering legislation to develop broad-based strategies to deal with this problem, when can we expect this government to follow suit and develop a made-in-Alberta solution that ensures we are doing what we can for people suffering with this terrible, debilitating disease?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the hon. member wants to talk about the testing for Lyme disease or the treatment of Lyme disease. If he has information that suggests that anyone in this province has been denied tests for Lyme disease, that are funded in our province under the Alberta health care insurance plan, I'd be very happy to receive his files and to talk to him about those instances. But I repeat that we make decisions in Alberta about the health services we offer based on the current and best clinical evidence that's available. I take advice from the chief medical officer in this respect, and I am very assured that Albertans have access, as I said, to the current and best tests.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Member for Sherwood Park, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Dialysis Service for Strathcona County Residents

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Strathcona hospital is set to open May 21. Sherwood Park has been waiting a long time for this. It is a leading-edge facility, and it includes a 24/7 emergency department. However, not all the services my constituents need are in place in this hospital. The lack of a dialysis unit in Sherwood Park requires residents from Sherwood Park and the surrounding areas to travel to the University of Alberta, Royal Alexandra, or Grey Nuns hospitals. To the Minister of Health: my constituents want to know why the Strathcona county hospital doesn't have a dialysis unit.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad that the hon. member appreciates the excellence in health care that will be

offered to her constituents as a result of the \$130 million facility that was opened in the area last week. With respect to dialysis needs this was taken into account in the planning for the new facility. While I certainly appreciate that people would like the service to be as convenient as possible, I know the hon. member would understand that many of her constituents and the residents in this area are very close to services in Edmonton that provide these services, much closer to home than in other areas of the province.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Ms Olesen: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the lack of an additional dialysis unit in Sherwood Park makes receiving treatment more difficult for many vulnerable Alberta people, will you implement this vital service?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the demand for dialysis services is rising across the province. Increasingly, we are meeting these needs through home dialysis, but we actually have fellow Albertans in northern and rural areas of the province that are having a much more difficult time accessing dialysis services than any of us would like to have.

With all due respect to the hon. member, the facility that opened last week is a state-of-the-art facility and includes many services that you would not find in other parts of the province, and they are also located very close to dialysis . . .

3:00

The Speaker: Thank you.
Final supplemental.

Ms Olesen: Thank you. To the same minister: given that this directly affects many of my constituents on a daily basis, what can we expect for a timeline on this decision?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, we have no decision under consideration at the moment to establish a dialysis unit at the Strathcona county hospital. What we have is a unique facility, unique in Alberta and in Canada, that, as the hon. member herself mentioned, offers 24/7 emergency services, 27 treatment beds, a CT scanner, mental health and addiction services, a full-service lab, and many, many other services under one roof, that would, in fact, I believe, be the envy of any community across Canada. We'll continue to work to monitor the needs of the community as time goes forward, but we believe we have built the facility that meets . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Drinking Water Contamination Complaint

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ann Craft is a constituent of mine who's been involved in a two-and-a-half-year fight with this government over the contamination of her drinking water due to oil activity close to her property. She has written dozens of letters, made dozens of phone calls, and has had no satisfaction from this government. This is about property rights and this government's lack of action to protect them. To the minister of sustainable resource development: why, after two and a half years and dozens of letters and phone calls, has this government continued to fail my constituent?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the first I've heard of this, but I am prepared to say this to the member. If he gives me the name and the address and the phone number of the constituent, I will personally give them a call, and we will sit down and see what the issues are, and if we can resolve them, we will.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Minister.

Given that the enforcement of environmental concerns resulting from the activity of the energy industry are now under the purview of the Alberta Energy Regulator, will the Minister of Energy order the AER to investigate and rectify the unacceptable conditions on Ann Craft's property?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. Minister of ESRD just said, I am also not aware of this incident, but I'd be happy to find out the information from the hon. member, if he'd like to share that with us, and to look at the situation.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Fox: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's evident that the mail hasn't been read in a couple of these ministries.

Given that the government has allowed Ann's calls and letters to go unanswered for two and a half years and given this issue of property rights, environmental protection, and, quite frankly, a serious public health concern, do the ministers understand why Albertans have completely lost confidence in you, your government, and in the new Alberta Energy Regulator?

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I take great offence to the member opposite saying that we don't return letters or answer phone calls. The people in our department are very conscious about the environment, and they're very conscious about the work they do. I will say to you that if a letter was written or if a phone call was made, I would say that those phone calls would be returned. Let me say that we don't always agree with the people on the other end of the phone. The answer might be no, so that person may not be happy. But I will commit personally that I will deal with this issue, and I will talk to that constituent. We'll come to a resolve on the issue.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That concludes our time for question period.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: You have two minutes each for the statements.

Hunger in Alberta

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, it's world Hunger Awareness Week in Canada, and while there's not a member in this Assembly who wouldn't agree that we are all fortunate to live in this province, Alberta is not immune from the scourge of hunger. According to the Alberta Food Bank Network Association about 53,000 Albertans turned to their local food bank for assistance every month in 2012. That's roughly equivalent to the population of Grande Prairie. What's even more alarming is the fact that 44 per cent of them, nearly half, were children, which is considerably

higher than the national average of 36 per cent. These numbers are too high.

Hunger isn't always in your face and out in the open. It can strike even the hardest working individuals and families, and it can strike without warning. My hometown of High River knows this all too well. In the aftermath of last year's floods thousands of my fellow residents, who had never experienced the pain and uncertainty of not having enough to eat, suddenly found themselves dependent on the local food bank. Even today, 11 months after the fact, the High River Salvation Army food bank is still in a crunch. In March food bank worker Lynn Spencer said this: in the two and a half years I've been working here, I've never seen the shelves this bare of necessities for our food hampers.

Food banks are often the first access point for Albertans in need and the avenue to identify those in need of a helping hand. I'd like to thank them for the work that they do in helping our most vulnerable in our communities in their hours of need.

Today my colleagues from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Medicine Hat, Cypress-Medicine Hat, and Cardston-Taber-Warner have joined me in going without food for the day in order to raise awareness for hunger. I thank them for the support of this important cause. We hope to gain a small understanding of what thousands of Albertans go through every single day.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a place of tremendous opportunity for so many, but occasionally people fall through the cracks. Let this week be a reminder to us all that hunger is a real problem, even in Alberta. Please contribute to your local food bank.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Calgary-Hawkwood.

School Fees

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta families are finding themselves more and more stretched each month when they sit down at the kitchen table with their budget. On top of paying some of the highest rates in the country for housing, food, and utilities, now this government is also expecting Albertans to pick up an ever-increasing part of the tab for their children's education.

The Calgary board of education is struggling with their annual budget. Shortfalls in funding from the government year after year have left them with only bad options. Hard-working families are now faced with increases of up to 53 per cent for some fees. Busing, instructional supplies, and noon hour supervision fees are all increasing, which adds up to several hundred dollars per child for Alberta families.

For one Calgary family already pinching pennies, this means fees of \$1,280 next year, nearly double last year and 4 per cent of their annual family budget. Calgary is not unique. School boards across the province are struggling to find ways to continue to provide top-notch education with little support or commitment from this PC government. Funding on a per-student basis has been decreasing province-wide for four years.

In Edmonton busing and supervision fees can already add up to \$500 per student, and the board may be forced to increase these in June. In Rocky View transportation fees increased by over 25 per cent last year, and now families are faced with another 20 per cent this year. Thanks to this government's misplaced priorities and short-sightedness more and more costs for important public services are being downloaded onto hard-working Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, with family budgets being stretched further and further each month, now this government is leaving behind the

hundreds of thousands of Alberta families who have trusted in public education to ensure successful futures for their children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

Robert Thirsk High School Opening

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I proudly attended the grand opening of Robert Thirsk high school along with the former Minister of Infrastructure and school trustees and Dr. Robert Thirsk himself, the well-known Canadian astronaut whom the school was named after.

This is the newest high school in my constituency of Calgary-Hawkwood. It is a big milestone following years of hard work by many stakeholders and the government. The school, which is located in the community of Arbour Lake, has a capacity of 1,500 students and accommodates students from seven surrounding neighbourhoods.

Inspired by Dr. Thirsk, the school believes that the words "personalizing," "connecting," and "thriving" are the living descriptors of the work the school community does, which helps create a vibrant learning environment. Students are active and vocal in learning and participate in various student-led initiatives.

Within eight months of opening, they have already achieved many accolades. They won the city of Calgary championship in junior football. They launched their inaugural FIRST robotics team and hosted the third annual international student leadership summit.

Through advanced technologies and dynamic facilities students have the opportunity to explore their abilities and recognize their full potential. As Dr. Thirsk stated, the sky isn't the limit for those bright minds.

Mr. Speaker, as the area MLA I am so encouraged by the potential demonstrated by those youngsters, so thrilled by the joy expressed by their parents and schoolteachers, and so thankful for the contributions made by our government, which have made a significant difference in my community. This is what we are elected for: to build Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

3:10 Dingman Discovery Well Centennial

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans can take pride in the rich history of our great province. That storied history speaks of this land's first people, Alberta's First Nations, whose culture reflects the beauty of the landscape that is at the heart of age-old traditions and customs. It speaks of our early settlers, who came to this land to till the soil and plant the seeds of a new life for themselves and a future for those to come.

And it speaks of the wildcatters, the dreamers, and the derrick hands who were willing to risk all they had on little more than a gut feeling, on a belief that down below the fertile topsoil lay the promise of even greater riches that would fuel that drive into the future, that would build the success of an entirely new industry and the prosperity of a province still in its infancy.

Mr. Speaker, a deep rumble preceded the gush of oil and gas that spewed forth from Dingman 1 in Turner Valley that Thursday in May, 1914. It was followed by the roar of cheers from those present and those who crowded the streets of Calgary upon

learning the news. The echoes of that celebration, of the excitement and optimism, resonate today as 100 years later we mark this important anniversary and its ongoing impact on the social, cultural, and economic life of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Dingman discovery of May 14, 1914 was the discovery of Alberta's first commercial oil field. That discovery led to the development of the Turner Valley gas plant, the first commercial natural gas processing facility west of Ontario, now both a provincially and federally recognized historic site. More importantly, that discovery touched off a flurry of scientific, technological, cultural, and social exploration.

Mr. Speaker, 100 years have passed since that momentous day in Turner Valley, but not even time can temper the optimism, the determination, the spirit of that day. We have learned a great deal, and the industry that those early pioneers established has grown and continues to grow. Their dreams have become the dreams of all those who have made Alberta the fastest growing province in Canada.

The centennial celebrations being held on May 14, 2014, at the historic Turner Valley gas plant are . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Emergency Preparedness

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your grandson. I also have a new granddaughter, that was born last Saturday, Nicola Marie, so we're in good company.

I'm pleased today to rise and recognize Emergency Preparedness Week, an event that takes place in communities across Canada to remind us of the importance of planning and preparation. Planning ahead can significantly reduce the impact of an emergency or a disaster and help the recovery process begin. It takes only a few simple actions to reduce the effects of a disaster.

At the individual level, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are encouraged to have enough food, water, and supplies on hand to survive on their own for 72 hours. They should have one emergency kit in their vehicle and another that they can grab at a moment's notice in case they must leave home quickly.

At the provincial level we are taking action as well, Mr. Speaker, to ensure Albertans are informed when a disaster or an emergency is threatening their community. Alberta emergency alert is the public warning system that alerts Albertans to emergencies over the radio, television, and Internet, and now Android users can download a free mobile app that delivers alerts based on a user's location. I encourage Albertans to sign up to receive alerts so they can have information in real time about impending emergencies or disasters. This initiative is another important partnership between the government of Alberta, local authorities, and broadcasters, where everyone works to communicate life-saving alerts more effectively to Albertans.

We all have a role to play in keeping our communities safe. By working together, we can help ensure the safety of Albertans when disasters threaten our communities. Visit emergencyalert.alberta.ca to learn more.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, and thank you for your kind comments about grandchildren, including mine.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Lacombe

Mr. Fox: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to take a brief moment to talk about one of Canada's greatest places, Lacombe. Just last month Lacombe's Main Street was dedicated as one of Canada's greatest places by the Canadian Institute of Planners.

Our region has deep agricultural roots and a rich history that defines Lacombe's identity to this very day. In Lacombe we wear our love of that history on our sleeves. It's evident when you stroll through our historic downtown. You see it in buildings like the flatiron building, the many murals painted in the downtown core, and the artifacts spread between the Flatiron Museum, the blacksmith museum, and the Michener House museum.

In 1883 Edward Barnett settled the area before the arrival of the railroad. In a little over a decade the little community grew from just a stopping house into a hamlet and soon into a village. By 1902 this bustling little village had a very busy commercial centre and a prominent Main Street. In 1904 the flatiron building became the most prominent landmark on Main Street.

In 1906 a devastating fire burned through Main Street, destroying most of the buildings in the downtown though the flatiron did survive. In the wake of the rebuilding, the Lacombe town council decreed that all frame buildings be brick veneered and that all new structures be of brick construction, and our beautiful downtown was reborn.

I encourage you all to visit Lacombe to enjoy one of our many festivals like the Encore festival, showcasing artwork, poetry, pottery, and photography. Take in Lacombe Days, our annual summer bash, and stop by the Lacombe Culture and Harvest Festival, or maybe you'll decide to capture the charm of the holiday season at our Light Up the Night Festival. Just be sure that while you're here, you check out our Main Street and learn the history behind it at the I Love Main Street exhibit at the Flatiron Museum, so carefully preserved by the passionate people of the Lacombe & District Historical Society.

Mr. Speaker, I know that all members will claim their community as the greatest place in Canada, but in Lacombe, with its Main Street, we actually have an award to back that up.

Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee it is my honour to table our report, which unanimously recommends the appointment of the hon. Marguerite Trussler, QC, as the next Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta for a five-year term commencing May 26, 2014.

Now that our committee's mandate is complete, I'd like to quickly thank all of my committee colleagues for their dedication throughout the search process and acknowledge the valuable support provided to the committee by the staff in corporate human resources and the Legislative Assembly Office. I have five copies of the report.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give oral notice of Government Motion 14.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the hon. Marguerite Trussler, QC, be appointed Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta for a five-year term commencing May 26, 2014.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: We have a number of these today. Let us move as quickly as we can through them, please, starting with Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of eight different letters written by my constituents and Albertans that are struggling with Lyme disease. They highlight how our current system leaves many Albertans jumping hurdles as they seek help and answers for their illness. We're only tabling eight today because I wanted to do that before this session ends. There will be many more in the fall.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I understand you have several, so proceed with the first.

Ms Blakeman: I do. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a long list. On behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and leader of the Liberal opposition I'd like to table a copy of a news release by the Alberta Teachers' Association in which they talk about the FOIP that they have done, hoping that disclosure of other research activities and findings will determine the extent to which the task force on education used a broad and balanced approach to make recommendations.

3:20

All of the next series relates to the questions that I asked today. The first tabling, obtained from the Edmonton courthouse, is the government approvals policy from Alberta Environment, environmental management division, in particular setting out that any organization that has a portion of its members living in the geographic vicinity of the activity will be considered directly affected.

The next related tablings, then, also from the Edmonton courthouse, are rejection letters from when the oil sands coalition was rejected for the first time for its stand on the hearing on the Southern Pacific Resource Corporation's McKay thermal project. There is a second letter of rejection on that same project. As a result, Mr. Speaker, no NGOs were heard on that application on the STP McKay thermal project, phase 2.

We have the judge's ruling from the Court of Queen's Bench on the last time and on that particular rejection, which I will note says:

In my view the entire process in this case is so tainted by the "Briefing Note" that . . . I need only refer to the applicants' contention that the Director breached the principles of natural justice [et cetera].

I've given you that one.

Then we have a copy of, in fact, the tainted briefing note, which was used by the judge in rejecting what he was doing.

Then we have a very strange – sorry for the editorial statement – press release from the minister in October 2013 for some reason engaging in NDP bashing, including the federal NDPs. I have no idea why they would engage in that, but they did.

Also from the Edmonton courthouse are templates that the government uses to arbitrarily reject or accept applicants for intervenor status. We have the template for that, which was used repeatedly and is quite recognizable.

Also from the courthouse are four letters that are requesting additional information in order to allow intervenor status, followed by three letters that reject individuals for intervenor status although they have provided all the information that was requested.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A constituent of mine in Taber, Alberta, Judy Jensen – she's a very caring daughter – has expressed some concerns about the care that her parents are receiving in a facility, Linden View, in Taber. I have the requisite number of copies outlining some of her concerns, that I would like to table today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table today the requisite number of copies of a letter from Mrs. Patricia Lovitt from Bridlewood in Calgary. She's been on a wait-list for shoulder replacement surgery for over two years. She compares this to elder abuse. In the letter she makes some comments on the disconnect between the long wait times and some of the obscene salaries of health executives and compels this PC government to refocus their efforts on our health care system.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Griffiths, Minister of Service Alberta, the report dated June 2013 entitled Condominium Property Act Review: Consultation Analysis Report.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Statement by the Speaker

Page Recognition

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are near the end of the Routine. There are no points of order today. However, there is an important

piece of business that we're going to take a few minutes to address, and that is the recognition of our pages, who serve us daily in this House. There might be a few more outside; I'm just going to ask them to come in here.

I am in receipt of a letter dated May 7, 2014, addressed to me and to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, from the retiring pages. It reads as follows:

Mr. Speaker,

The end of Session signifies something different for everyone. Although many of you are excited to return to your families and constituents, for the Pages this is a bittersweet time. The end of Session is accompanied by the realization that for some of us our time on the Chamber floor has come to an end. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the incredible opportunity we have had to serve the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

There are countless people who have made this into such an unforgettable experience. We would like to thank the Sergeant-at-Arms for teaching us the meaning of leadership; the Table Officers for their sense of humor and grace under pressure; the staff in 315 and 412 for their constant support and words of wisdom; and the Security Staff for showing us that it's important to find a job you look forward to, with people you enjoy working with. As well we wish to extend our gratitude to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, without whom, our role in the Chamber would not exist. From them we have gained a lot of useful knowledge: practical implementation of democracy to their preference of temperature and ice cube ratio of their water. And we would like to thank you Mr. Speaker. When you took office you encouraged all Members to develop a Credo to guide their work. As Pages we took this to heart, and would like to thank you for your role in developing our motto: [C for] constant vigilance, [R for] rapid delivery, [E for] extraordinary teamwork, [D for] diligence, and [O for] opportunity of a lifetime.

As we reflect on our experiences at the Legislature, we recognize how fortunate we are to have had the "best seat in the house" to witness history in the making, along with previous generations of Alberta Pages. A 1913 Edmonton Journal article describes the Pages as "bright streaks of mischief", and we are honored to join the ranks of Pages whose laughter has echoed under the dome.

For many of us, walking into the Chamber on our first day here felt like walking into a newspaper headline, and we feel extremely privileged to have played even a small role in that story. Through every point of order, amendment, and late night standing division, our time here has been unforgettable. The generosity and hard work of all the Members in this Assembly has shown us the type of leaders we would like to become and the future we hope to aspire to. For many of us this has truly been more than a job, it has been our second home. It has been a great honor and privilege to serve on the floor of the Assembly and for that we would like to say a sincere thank you for this incredible experience.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Cashman, Tierra Stokes, Laura Bryan, Chantelle Bryce, Alyssa Edgerton, Stephanie Nedoshytko, Ben Thronson.

Hon. members, let us thank these wonderful pages with our applause. [Standing ovation]

Hon. pages, words cannot express our thanks, nor can any particular gift, but my deputy is going to try to do both right now.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont and Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure I can't do justice to the wonderful letter that you shared with us that was

written by these very, very bright young people, and I mean that sincerely. I certainly wish you well in your future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker and hon. members, it is with regret that we say goodbye to seven of these hard-working pages at the end of this session. They are Helen Cashman, our head page; Tierra Stokes, our training and development page; Alyssa Edgerton; Ben Thronson; Chantelle Bryce; Laura Bryan; and Stephanie Nedoshytko. Helen, Alyssa, Ben, Chantelle, and Stephanie are retiring as they have now completed their first year of university. Tierra and Laura are both going away for university this autumn.

I ask you to join me in recognizing the efforts of our diligent pages, who daily show patience – and a lot of patience, Mr. Speaker – and understanding of our many demands. They carry out their tasks with attention to duty, including some very, very late nights of work with us.

3:30

On behalf of all members each departing page is given a framed print of the Legislative Assembly as a token of our appreciation. These gifts are from the personal contribution of every member of our Assembly. Along with the gifts are our best wishes. We are honoured to have our pages work with us in the Legislature to serve Albertans. I ask our Deputy Chair of Committees to hand a gift to our head page, Helen Cashman, who is representing all the retiring pages. Helen, in turn, will present each of the rest of the retiring pages with their gifts from us later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to our pages.

The Speaker: Thank you, all, and thank you for participating and for the wonderful tributes that have been given to you all. We wish you everything the best in your future careers, and we hope that the memories you have made here will come back to you often and that they will be as wonderful for you as they will be for all of us. God bless you all, and good luck to you.

That concludes our Routine. I believe we can move on.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Committee Membership Changes

13. Mr. Campbell moved:
Be it resolved that the following changes to:
 - (a) the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that Mr. Webber replace Mr. VanderBurg, that Mr. Pedersen replace Mrs. Forsyth as deputy chair, that Mr. Fox replace Mrs. Forsyth.
 - (b) the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be approved: that Ms Kennedy-Glans replace Mr. Dorward.
 - (c) the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be approved: that Mr. Cao replace Mr. Webber, that Mr. Hale replace Mr. Anglin as deputy chair.
 - (d) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that Mr. Jeneroux replace Ms Fenske.
 - (e) the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be approved: that Ms Redford replace Mr. Sandhu.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other speakers to this motion?
If not, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Government Motion 13 carried]

The Speaker: The Hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) so that we can proceed with the debate on Government Motion 14.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, unanimous consent has been requested in order to deal with Government Motion 14.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Ethics Commissioner Appointment

14. Mr. Campbell moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the hon. Marguerite Trussler, Q.C., be appointed Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta for a five-year term commencing May 26, 2014.

The Speaker: Are there any speakers to this motion?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Government Motion 14 carried unanimously]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

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

Bill 11

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014

The Chair: I'll recognize the first speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Yes. I'm pleased to be able to rise again in Committee of the Whole on Bill 11, having spoken to it a few times yesterday, and now am pleased to move an amendment to Bill 11.

Ms Blakeman: Amendment?

Ms Notley: An amendment.

So what I am going to do is . . .

The Chair: If you'd just pause for a moment, hon. member, and circulate the amendment to the table as well. I'll be back to you in just a few moments.

This will be amendment A7, hon. members.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, you may proceed.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. This amendment is as follows. I'm moving that Bill 11, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014, be amended by adding the following after section 17. In 17.1 the following is added after section 131:

131.1 For the purposes of section 131(1)(d.1), no regulation shall be made prior to being considered by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly.

The point around this motion goes back to the conversation we had at some length yesterday, where members from all parties were struggling with how to deal with the application of the publication ban, when it would be used, who would get access to it, who it would apply to, all those kinds of things. What this is an attempt to do is to ensure that all members of the Assembly can discuss appropriate regulations that would constrain and/or circumscribe the rules around the publication ban's use by the government. So it provides an opportunity for there to be public, open discussion and committee discussion to consider all the interesting possible scenarios that we needed to prepare for.

I think this is an opportunity to find a collective win on this particular issue and for all parties who have an interest in this issue as well as all members of this Assembly to participate in trying to come up with the best application of the rule around when fatalities are published.

I urge members of this Assembly to support this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On behalf of the Minister of Human Services, we are happy to accept this amendment.

The Chair: Hon. members, should we call the question on the amendment?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A7 carried]

The Chair: Are there other speakers?

Ms Notley: I do have another amendment here. I'm sorry, but you knew it was coming. I'm pretty sure you're not going to vote for it, so I really feel the need to explain why that's not a good decision. I'm going to do that. I'm going to just hand that over to you guys, and you can distribute it. Let me know when I can speak again.

The Chair: I certainly will, hon. member. Did you send me the original?

3:40

Ms Notley: I did, I think. Let me just check. I did.

The Chair: Hon. members, if an original turns up on your desk, I'd ask to trade it with you, to the chair, please. We seem to have misplaced the original.

Hon. member, you may proceed, but I'm still waiting for the original. This will be A8.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This amendment is one that ought not to surprise people who have been closely following this debate, because I have telegraphed my belief that this is what

we need to do even before we got into discussion on the bill, even when the minister first started talking about some of the changes he wanted to make.

What this amendment does is that it amends the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014, and it also amends through that the Child and Youth Advocate Act. In essence, even though it's very long, all it's really doing is injecting the word "may" into every subclause so that there was the ability to exceed one subclause from the "may," and that is subclause (d), which I've added, and subclause (d) says that the children's advocate "must."

What we're asking that this Assembly direct that the children's advocate must do is

investigate systemic issues arising from

- (i) a serious injury to or the death of a child who at the time of the injury or death was receiving a designated service referred to in sections 1(e)(i) . . .

carrying on. The other one:

- (ii) the serious injury to or death of a child who at any time during the 2-year period immediately preceding the serious injury or death received a designated service.

What this does is that it builds on the expansion of the mandate to the children's advocate in that we understand that the act already allows the advocate to go back two years to look at serious injuries or deaths that occurred in the previous two years. It incorporates that, but it also mandates that the advocate actually engage in an investigation in each of those cases.

Now, we have a general sense of what it is we are looking at here in the numbers, because we're able to go back to what those numbers have been over the last 10 or 15 years, and we're probably looking potentially at a number on an annual basis somewhere around 30 investigations a year. So it's not an overwhelming number.

What it does do is that it gets back to that foundational principle that I have been repeating over and over and over again since I was first elected in 2008, which is that when we review what happened in these circumstances, the review must, first, be independent and, second, must be transparent. We cannot have a plethora of internal reviews with hand-picked expert committees from this place and that place and this mandate and that mandate, where the reports almost always end up staying internal and where nobody acts on them and the public is unaware of what's going on.

We tried to deal with this issue in the Leg. Offices Committee back in December. Rather than directing that the children's advocate do more investigations, what we would do is simply increase his resources so that he had the resources to do an adequate number of investigations. As you may know, Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is that in the last completed year for which we have information, 2012-2013, there were roughly 20 files that were sent to him by the ministry, and only four investigations took place. He explained to us in fairly good detail how that happened. Basically, what is sent to him is a one-page document from the medical examiner's office, and based on that, he has to make a decision whether or not to designate more resources to doing a more detailed investigation of what happened. Whether the public ever becomes aware in general of the systemic issues that surround a child's death only happens based on a one-page sheet from the medical examiner's office. In my view, that is not adequate.

We had a very dramatic situation here last fall when suddenly these numbers starting pouring out of the *Edmonton Journal* and then subsequently pouring out of the government. You know, we went from 10 fatalities a year to suddenly talking about hundreds and hundreds of fatalities. Then we heard: oh, well, it was all

natural deaths, so we don't need to worry about it. Then we learned that, no, a lot of these actually involved very serious systemic issues of neglect, which, coincidentally, are the same issues that the children's advocate has been talking about for many years but not in really specific terms because we didn't have the specific information upon which to have that specific discussion.

This is about actually injecting clarity, transparency, and independence into what's going on so that we can make the best, most reasoned, thoughtful, well-informed decisions about how to stop that from going on in the future. As much as I said yesterday that the minister's additional review programs that he's got in this act will probably serve to improve best practices within the ministry context – and there's certainly nothing bad about that; quite the opposite, it's probably good – it would not do anything to increase the independence and the transparency of the oversight of the system as a whole. This amendment is geared to that objective.

I ask members of the Assembly to accept this amendment so that we can actually demonstrate that we have the most independent and transparent system for review possible. I think that would serve the interests of all Albertans, certainly those very vulnerable Albertans who are the subject of these kinds of considerations.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm inclined to support this amendment but maybe not for the same reason specifically as the sponsoring member. I'm inclined to support it because of the transparency that it offers. As I move through my constituency and go to other events and listen to people, as I read and research election issues about why the number of voters that we have participating is declining and why we can't capture a younger voting demographic, I keep hearing the same thing over and over again, and that is: "We want to be more involved. We want to be closer to the decision-making process. We want to have a better understanding of how government is doing things."

My first reaction to that was: "Oh, for heaven's sake, there are lots of opportunities. There are policy conventions that are offered by every political party. There are lots of different ways to get involved." But the more I listen, the more I come to understand that it's more than that. I don't know that it's specifically about decision-making. I think it's about understanding the process. When decisions come out, for example, from an independent legislative officer like the children's advocate, people go: "Why would they make that decision? Why was that done? Why was that choice made?"

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

We've had such a building of secrecy, partly to make us look important. If you're the one hoarding the information, you're the king or the queen. I mean, you know it all. Nobody can challenge you, right? Nobody can say, "You should have done it differently," or, "You're wrong." But what's happened to us is that that hoarding of information, those walls that have been built to not allow people to watch us make decisions and understand what influences decisions: that has actually made people feel disconnected from what's going on. I think they want to be able to tell, to know. The reaction that I always get from politicians is: "Oh, my God, no. We don't want the public to actually be scrutinizing what we're doing because, you know, they won't

understand; they won't have the background. They'll get involved, it'll be vexatious, and it'll just draw the whole thing out to no real purpose." I disagree.

3:50

My experience has been that when you give people that information, they do take the time to read it and understand it, and for the most part that's it. They go away saying: "Okay. I understand why they made that decision, and I agree or I disagree." But away they go. I haven't seen or experienced, you know, a huge number of interfering, vexatious issues being raised around that.

I'll give you a very small example. I have always published the budget broken down into about 20 categories for my constituency office. I publish it every year in my annual report. I just thought: well, they're paying for it; they should see it, right? That just seemed obvious to me. I have always put along with that that anyone that wants to come in and actually scrutinize it line by line is more than welcome to do so. We just request that they make an appointment because we would have to have someone sitting there with them on the computer just for the privacy of the other things that are going on in the office at the time.

You know, no one has ever taken me up on that. I think it's because they don't need to. They can see how much money we got. They can see how we spent it. I have had a few people phone and say: well, why was this so high or that so low? I've been able to explain it, and that's good. So I've had the opposite reaction. People have not, you know, peppered my office with phone calls demanding to know much more detail. Rather, it's given them enough information that they've left me alone. I think that's what we need more of across all of our processes.

Every time I'm sitting on an act review committee or a policy field committee or anything like that that's doing work, I always put a motion up as early in the proceedings as possible to say that, you know, all of the documents that we use to make decisions should be posted, must be posted to the website so the public can understand how we reached a decision. If people are not willing to have their documents posted, then I say – and so far I've had agreement from my committee colleagues – that we will not use the document. I really believe that people should be able to go on that website, read what we read, and understand how we came to a decision based on that material. If we're reading secret stuff, that nobody else gets to see, then we've got a problem.

What's being anticipated here in the motion put forward by Edmonton-Strathcona is that this information is made much more readily available, and I agree with that. I mean, I've just gone through a number of examples of why I think it's important but particularly around children who are injured or die while in the care or under intervention services from the government. One of the most intimate and vulnerable acts that the public turns over to the government is: please look after our children. If for some reason a family is not able to look after their children, to hand your child over to the government is the ultimate gesture of trust, and we should be able to reinforce that trust, we the public, we the media, we anybody that wants to understand the details of what went wrong in a situation. How the government and the children's advocate decided to work their way out of it is important information, and I think it should be valued as that. I have great trust that the public will not abuse that. For that reason I support the amendment that has been brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to comment on this in Committee of the Whole for Bill 11, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act. I do believe

that what is included in this amendment could lead us to a better understanding and, you know, ultimately, maybe better education and fewer kids that end up in the custody and care of the government.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my honour to rise and speak in favour of this amendment. I mean, I'll keep my comments brief, but I think it's important that all members of the Assembly understand what this amendment is proposing.

First of all, it's separating the different functions of the advocate or giving him or her the ability to not have to choose between one or all of the subsections, giving the advocate more freedom to be able to do a combination of things: may communicate and visit with the child; on their own initiative assist in appealing or reviewing a decision. It's talking about participating in processes where decisions are made. I think that this amendment from the onset, Madam Chair, is quite a reasonable amendment, but the point that I think is specifically very important within the amendment is under (d): the advocate "must investigate systemic issues arising from . . . a serious injury to or the death of a child" while in care or who was in care within the previous two-year period.

I think that that's very important, and this amendment does strengthen the bill, which, again, is obviously the goal of the Assembly when we're in committee. So I strongly urge that all members accept this amendment so that we can strengthen the role and the abilities of the advocate even more.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you hon. member.

Are there any other speakers to amendment A8?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other speakers on Bill 11 in Committee of the Whole?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Mr. Campbell: I move we rise and report Bill 11.

[Motion carried]

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

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

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration a certain bill. The Committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 11. Madam Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by

the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Do all members concur with the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? That's carried.

4:00 **Government Bills and Orders**
 Third Reading

Bill 12
 Statutes Amendment Act, 2014

[Adjourned debate May 6: Mr. Anderson]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members who wish to speak?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think I'm behooved to speak to this omnibus bill. You know, I have some initial comments before I get into the bill. Again, this isn't the first time that I've gotten up in this House and spoken to the breakneck speed with which this PC government rams through legislation. I find it sad and actually a misnomer that this bill is merely housekeeping. When we are amending over 16 different acts with one piece of legislation – and some parts of this are significantly changing acts – it's dishonest to call this a housekeeping bill. I've heard stories in the past that when there were two or more acts being amended, they would actually be separated out into separate pieces of legislation and not just thrown in as one massive bill without agreement from all parties.

You know, part of where some of my comments yesterday were coming from was that I was assured by the government that changes were going to be relatively minor and that there were some positive steps or positive amendments within this bill. But it's clear, upon further reading of this bill and interpreting it, that this simply isn't true.

Madam Speaker, it's worth mentioning that the purpose of having a Westminster system, or a multiparty system, is to ensure that there are different perspectives and points of view represented in the House. In order for the opposition to do our job, we need time to be able to go through a bill, read it, interpret it, look at how we can improve it, come up with different ways of improving it, and then submit amendments, which all takes time.

I mean, we appreciate the hard work that the table officers do in taking our amendments and then putting them into proper form. But when we rush through pieces of legislation such as this bill – the fact that we're already on third reading, Madam Speaker, is actually not doing the bill nor Albertans any justice. Again, you know, we don't live in a one-party state, although some who have been born in the last 43 years may think so. The purpose, again, of having an opposition is for us to be able to debate. I would argue that when we rush through legislation, we're unable to do our job, and we are doing a disservice to Albertans.

I can also comment that despite the fact that the government has been cautioned by various opposition members or encouraged to accept amendments on various bills, in my short two years being a member in this House, Madam Speaker, there have been several bills that have come back to be amended because, again, the government rushed through the bill in the first place, despite the amendments and opposition calls to slow down the process and to seriously consider some of the amendments put forward by the opposition parties.

My concern is, first of all, the speed with which we're moving this through but also all of the different acts that it affects and the fact that we could be here, well, this fall, back in the House amending some of the pieces of this bill.

So I'll move through this fairly briefly. Regarding the Health Information Act the OIPC just saw these changes on Monday – and today is only Wednesday if I'm not mistaken – so they're still reviewing them. First of all, that highlights one of the flaws with what we're doing here. I mean, legislation should be developed and passed through consultation, review, analysis with stakeholders. Again, there have been numerous examples where there have been claims that groups have been consulted, yet when opposition parties – and I would go so far as to say that when approached by all three opposition parties, that's not what we're hearing as far as different groups having true dialogue and input into a bill.

You know, one of the problems with this one piece is that we as MLAs represent thousands of constituents and their voices, and we need time to consult with the people that we're representing. With this time frame, obviously, none of that is possible.

The section regarding health information refers to what comprises a small section of the bill within the expertise, though, of the office of the Privacy Commissioner. As the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has pointed out, they haven't been able to fully review the changes yet. There are some concerns with the language, with how it's written.

Regarding the vital statistics birth certificate changes I want to point out what I think Jan Buterman of the Trans Equality Society of Alberta said, and I quote: the problem with regulations is they can be changed on a whim; they don't have to be brought into the Legislature, so it can be quite secret; my impression was that this was going to be quite thoughtful, and this doesn't exhibit any of that. End quote. I think that points to a very large problem with this bill and with this section when we're talking about vital statistics and birth certificate changes.

You know, when we're making these kinds of changes, they should be happening through legislation, where there is time to debate and where there's an opportunity to debate. Any time a bill passes through this House allowing ministers to make regulations which are going to greatly affect people, that's a real cause for concern, Madam Speaker. First of all, this government should not be rushing through legislation that impacts Albertans in a very personal manner. We should be sitting in this House debating pieces of legislation until we get it right. There shouldn't be any rush.

The other issue, quite frankly, is that gender is not something that should be left to the whim of the cabinet to decide behind closed doors, without consultation and without assurances of proper consultation. I would imagine that there are several members of this House that are quite surprised to learn that these types of decisions will be made behind closed doors and through regulation, not through legislation.

I'm going to move to the Government Organization Act. The amendment changes the definition of a court award in reference to trade agreements that can be defined under registration, which is troubling, Madam Speaker, because it turns the definition into something flexible or pliable, that can be construed or misconstrued. That's dependent on the cabinet of the day and their feelings toward how they want to apply this piece of the act. For example, one of the concerns is: what if there's a PC-friendly company that has an important case to go before the courts? Why should the standards be able to be changed quickly or modified in favour of a company or – let's flip that around – to work against a company that maybe is not in the government's favour?

You know, under this piece within this omnibus bill, Madam Speaker, regulations don't provide the same weight as legislation. As well, regulations aren't discussed and debated in this House, which is a real cause for concern.

As far as the Mines and Minerals Act the changes have been sold as extending the period for auditing royalties – that is true; they do that – but it actually appears to be a rewrite of the royalty audit legislation in general. It's concerning that in rewriting how royalty audits are governed, again the government has left incredible amounts up to regulation. You know, at least the Alberta NDP caucus has been asking the government to put it into legislation and not leave it up to regulation.

4:10

Within this example, again, you know, regulations are more flexible. They can be decided by the minister. They can be changed by cabinet. They're not subject to the full legislative process. As well, Madam Speaker, that opens up our audit system to the possibility in the future that if a specific royalty case is coming up and there's lobbying from the company about to be audited, suddenly the regulations are changed in such a way as to either provide more wiggle room to the company or to protect them. Again, that's cause for grave concern.

I mean, any time we leave something of this magnitude up to an individual minister or cabinet for their decision, which is made behind closed doors – we don't know what kind of influence they may succumb to or are put under – this causes real concern. Again, you know, the purpose of this Assembly is to have open and honest debate. When we leave things to the cabinet of the day, regardless of which party is in government, I will add, there is real cause for concern because that, in fact, Madam Speaker, threatens the very fabric of democracy.

For those reasons, I will not be supporting the Statutes Amendment Act, 2014, and I strongly urge the government to do likewise. Let's send this bill back to the drawing board. Let's pull out these pieces. Again, when we're making changes to over 16 acts, that is significant. There is nothing housekeeping about that. Let's break them out into individual bills. Let's have the proper time to debate it in this House and to engage members. Let's ensure that members of the community and organizations and representatives have the time to provide feedback and are consulted during the process, not after the fact, Madam Speaker. Consultation doesn't mean you change the rules to a game, and then you say: "So what you do think about the rules? Well, right. They're already changed." That's going about it in the wrong way.

We still have time in this House, albeit this bill has passed through Committee of the Whole, to the great frustration of myself, my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona, and my colleagues from the Alberta NDP. We still have an opportunity to not push this bill through and to break out the different pieces into separate pieces of legislation and give them the proper time that they require.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We have 29(2)(a).

Seeing no one interested in 29(2)(a), we will move to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thanks very much, Madam Speaker. It's my first opportunity to rise to speak to Bill 12, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2014. As my colleague from Edmonton-Centre has said so eloquently, this borrows a page from their federal cousins, who know a lot about omnibus bills and, clearly, are

trying to ram a whole bunch of unrelated issues while at the same time clouding the fact that, especially in Health, which I spent a lot of time looking at, there's a disconnect between what the minister is now taking over as a responsibility and what the Legislature actually learns from budget debates, which happen to exclude Alberta Health Services.

Here we are in the Legislature on the one hand holding the minister accountable for a budget of which we only hear roughly a third. That to me is the most egregious part of this kind of an attempt to centralize power around health services without acknowledging that while the minister does take responsibility for the health care system ultimately, we now have an Alberta Health Services that spends two-thirds of the budget without actually having any ability in the Legislature to review the details of that extensive budget and ensure that Albertans are getting value, that the health care system indicators are there, that we have reports indicating improvements in quality, access, and cost-effectiveness, which is our fundamental role.

This omnibus approach to so many issues leaves me cold. One can give credit to adopting the gender-neutral language and harmonizing the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act with the federal Civil Marriage Act and codifying civil marriage as the law, which codifies civil marriage as the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others. That's basic, and one can appreciate that finally, in the 21st century, we're getting there.

Ramming all of these issues – vital statistics; freehold mineral rights; government organization; charitable fundraising; the Societies Act; the Regional Health Authorities Act, including community health councils; the Health Information Act amendments requiring disclosure of a compromise of personal data, that we supported – but combining that with amendments related to allowing the commissioner to disclose information, amendments related to not disclosing information in the role of the commissioner and amendments related to the role of the Crown prosecutor, amendments related to regulations is a dog's breakfast, if I may use that analogy, with, of course, very little opportunity for us to consult with affected parties, very little opportunity to research this in the depth that it would justify.

It leaves us struggling a bit to want to support some of the good aspects of it while rejecting some of the duplicity that's here, as I say, with respect especially to the lack of accountability in health care and the centralization of control and, I would argue, the politicization now of our health care system. The man at the top is determining not only the health and wellness side of the system, the administration of the system, but now the leadership of the system – the vision, the principles, the planning, and policies – and is now also overseeing the budget and day-to-day operations.

Again, this not only raises questions about what the motives are here and how this is going to improve quality, access, and affordability, but it raises questions about how much more reactivity and instability we're going to create when political problems arise in the health care system, when crises arise, and the minister is drawn in again to make changes, reactions to problem areas that don't serve the longer term interests but serve short-term political interests. It's difficult to follow.

Some aspects of the administrative changes here and the language changes I believe are positive, but I cannot support especially the issues and cloudiness around the Regional Health Authorities Act and even the community health councils, for which it's not clear who is accountable in terms of how their advice at the community health councils gets translated into any kind of positive changes in the health care system. Why, indeed, Madam Speaker, would we have community health councils if their advice can be ignored, if regional differences and regional

challenges and regional needs all have to go through the minister's office and there is this, I guess, political sensitivity around a lot of the changes that may be requested at the local level?

We need to shift much more of the decision-making and monitoring and accountability to regional levels so that we can get a timely response: appropriate listening to front-line workers, assessment of quality at the interface with patient care. Also, the community health councils deserve to have a fair hearing when they are sincerely and respectfully presenting local and regional conditions that need to be addressed.

I will not be supporting this omnibus bill and would strongly suggest that although it's too late to sever these things, we should be trying to address some of these key issues in a different way. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a). Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other members that wish to speak to Bill 12 in third reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you. Well, I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak to this bill. I feel like I have so much more to offer to this debate now, a full 24 hours after speaking to it the first time and a full 28 hours after having our staff get a briefing on the majority of the bill.

As I've stated before and as I talked about in question period, Madam Speaker, I am very concerned about the process of this bill, the fact that this government has characterized it as being minor administrative changes. In fact, what we've got are 16 acts which are being amended, many of which are substantive, with little or no opportunity for the opposition to engage in a thorough review. I will say that I'm deeply frustrated by that.

As I said earlier today, it seems like this government really hasn't learned their lesson. I mean, it's been the apology road show for the last two weeks, Madam Speaker, with your folks having to constantly try and make up for the fact that they've been railroading over the wishes of Albertans on a number of different files. You'd think they would have listened or maybe taken some of that to heart, but the very same day that one of those step downs is going on, we introduce this piece of legislation and think that we can railroad it through in two days. You know, this is a sign of a government that has a problem. It's maybe admitted that it's got a problem, but, like with Rob Ford, we don't exactly know where they are right now. Are they in treatment? I'm not so sure. That's what we're dealing with.

Ms Blakeman: That's mean.

Ms Notley: Well, I know it's mean, but then I'm kind of little frustrated, too.

You know, the leopard is not changing its spots. Let me just talk about this a little bit, but before I do, I'd like to make sure that I have the time to move my amendment before I run out of time to speak because I have a tendency to go on without realizing it.

I would like to move an amendment to this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, we'll just pause while we have that amendment distributed throughout the House. Can we have the original copies brought to the table, please?

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This amendment simply states that the motion for third reading of Bill 12, Statutes Amendment Act, 2014, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 12, Statutes Amendment Act, 2014, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence."

The reason for this, of course, as I've stated, is that this piece of legislation has far too much substance jammed into it, and we've gotten nowhere near enough of a briefing. We've not had enough time to analyze this piece of legislation, and it is simply moving too quickly. Even in the 24 hours since people got a sense of what it includes and up to now, we've seen notable feedback from the public. Frankly, were it to go back to its sort of apologetic little self and find its inner politician that wants to get re-elected again, they would admit that probably it would be a better idea to stop and consult a little bit on some of these things.

What do we have going on here? Well, the first one, that I'll start with, relates to the Mines and Minerals Act and the freehold minerals act. Now, I have commented in question period and also outside of question period that we didn't get written briefings on this piece of legislation. As it turns out – and I must correct the record – it does appear as though some effort was made to give our office a written briefing on these two of the 16 amendments about a week and a half ago, two weeks ago. [interjection] I'm told that your office got one, as did the Wildrose office get one. We didn't get one because there was a communication misstep. I should acknowledge that that's what the minister is telling me is true, so I'm sure that it is the case.

Just as a result of working through this miscommunication, just about an hour ago I did get a copy of the written brief that we would have gotten a week and a half ago. I need to point out, however, that the difficulty with that written brief is that although it helps to focus and it's an absolutely necessary part of the process of ensuring that opposition members understand what a matter is about, there is no question that that has to be paired with an actual examination of the legislation itself when you finally see it. Of course, the legislation was only introduced on Monday, so basically we had to put the two together.

I have to say that with this particular ministry in the past I have been briefed by or gotten documents from this particular ministry that say: oh, this is just about regulatory efficiency and making things move more efficiently and faster, because we're all about growing business, yada, yada, yada. Then when you actually get the piece of legislation in front of you and you dig down, you find out that they've changed the rules so that – wait for it – the minister's office doesn't have to interfere with whether Pembina gets to be at a hearing anymore. We've now given that direct statutory authority to the review panel to ensure that they never have to let Pembina and others like them participate in environmental review hearings.

The point is that you need to actually look at what the government is saying that the legislation is about, because that's important, but you also still need to go back and look at the legislation and compare it to what was there before. That's a process that typically takes more than 24 hours, particularly when you're looking at 16 pieces of legislation. That is my concern. I appreciate that we did have an offer of a written briefing about a week and a half ago, I assume, but still we needed to see the legislation first, so we're still rushing.

On that issue as well, I'm also a little concerned because what we're doing is giving this minister and the government the ability to make regulations around salt caverns, which I have now had just a couple of moments to do a bit of research on, and I understand that that is where we are storing liquid natural gas.

Apparently, in Alberta we store over half of the liquid natural gas for the whole country in salt caverns. Also, apparently, Madam Speaker, this has actually proven to be quite a safety and environmental hazard in other jurisdictions. In my view, this is not an administrative matter. This is actually something that continues the long progress that we've made in this province towards just doing everything we can for the oil and gas industry without ever talking to the public about what the implications of that are to their clean air, clean land, and clean water; for instance, the fact that we have fracking happening all over the place and that we've never actually talked to the public about what the limits might want to be on that vis-à-vis urban development or its impact on groundwater or all those other things. This is not meaningless. That's what I have to say about that piece.

Now, let's talk about some of the other changes in there, Alberta Health Services. Now, it is correct that yesterday I said: well, gee whiz, you know, I guess that giving the minister the chance to have some oversight over the Alberta Health Services budget is a step forward. Who knew that he didn't have a yea or nay on that? As the leader of our caucus quite articulately pointed out today in question period, what would be even better would be if the Legislature had oversight of that budget and that rather than being allowed to only debate six envelopes in a \$14 billion budget, we in fact were able to look at that budget in the same way that we were able to look at any other budget that comes before this Legislative Assembly. That is actually a substantive and important piece of public policy that we should be discussing.

It is not administrivia, Madam Speaker, and for this government to suggest it is administrivia is profoundly disrespectful not only to the members of this Assembly but also to every single Albertan who depends upon our health care system, which I think is just about everybody. So that's the problem with that.

4:30

Now, the Health Information Act. The Government House Leader got up in question period today and said: oh, well, I read a press release from the Privacy Commissioner, and she's just okely-dokely with this. As I said at the time, I think that's an example of what happens when you try to read a press release in two minutes or you try to read a bill in 24 hours. You miss stuff. Just to be clear, the Privacy Commissioner did not say that she was okely-dokely with these changes. She actually pointed to two particular sections, and she said: "You know what? I think you might not be getting it right here. I have some concerns about a couple of different sections of what you're doing." She also said: this is my preliminary review because to review – I've only seen the legislation for the last 24 hours – I probably need a bit more time.

This person works day in, day out with this piece of legislation, and that's how she responds, yet somehow on behalf of the people of Alberta we're supposed to come in here and be able to analyze not only that change to that act but changes to 15 other acts in a 24-hour period and do it well and responsibly on behalf of the people we represent. Well, Madam Speaker, that is disrespectful to those people we represent, and it is ridiculous to expect that that can happen here. This is happening because this government is embracing the Harperesque approach to governance, which is: just jam it all in, as much as you can, and try to avoid any kind of legislative transparency, oversight, debate, wisdom, any of that, as much as possible. So that's the problem with that.

Then the other issue that we also have identified, of course, again, is the feedback from advocates within the transgendered community. Now, we had minister here who – I don't know. She's the minister of things we want to talk about on any given day. I'm

not exactly sure what her actual associate ministry title is. But the fact of the matter is that she sort of got up and suggested that: "Oh. We've consulted with everybody in the LGBTQ community, and they all love the way we are approaching the changes to gender identification on birth certificates." Well, in fact, they haven't.

In fact, a leader in that community, who is unquestionably a leader – does he speak for everybody? No. But does he speak for many people? Absolutely. That leader has said unequivocally that (a) he was never consulted, (b) his organization was never consulted, (c) he disagrees with the model the government is pursuing, the whole idea that the cabinet will come up with the rules around how he can prove his gender to the government. As I said before, you know, there are great folks over there, but that is not a group of people that I want deciding about how or when or if I identify my gender. It's just not the way it should work.

They are saying that what they should have in legislation is an unequivocal right to swear an oath: this is my gender, full stop at the end. It puts the decision with the citizen, with the person. That's what they're saying, and that should be in the legislation. That's a fundamentally different model than: well, you know, we'll all sit around quietly behind closed doors, and we'll come up with the rules and the hoops that you have to jump through.

Again, Madam Speaker, that is not administrivia. That impacts seriously and significantly the lives of many Albertans, and we're just sliding it through like it's no big deal. That's what happens when you are sloppy and when you are rushed and when you are basically trying to sprint out of this building as fast as possible to deal with political issues within your somewhat stressed political organization, which is what's going on with these government members. It's bad governance, it's bad for the people of Alberta, it's disrespectful to the members of this Assembly, and it should be rejected in its entirety. These issues should all just come back, first of all, with an adequate amount of consultation with the people who are affected; secondly, with an adequate amount of time for members of this Assembly to engage in an informed discussion about what these things mean; and, thirdly, separately so that each issue can be given the attention it deserves.

I urge members of this Assembly to support this motion and agree that this bill should be not now read but instead should be read this day six months hence.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Just because I didn't introduce this amendment, this amendment will be known as amendment HA. It's a hoist amendment.

We have 29(2)(a) if anybody would like to use 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any other speakers who wish to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I'm not sure that we need to do a hoist on this. I think the purpose of the member was to draw attention to what was happening here increasingly, and for that I appreciate it. I don't think I really want to have to deal with this again in six months. I think the situation she's trying to draw attention to is well made. I kind of skimmed the whole topic when I was first talking about this.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that there have been some changes that are really hard for me and maybe all members of the opposition – I don't know – to deal with. I don't know whether it gets attributed to the faster speed of communication, with electronic and digital communications, with instant messaging, the thing on the phone – you'd think I don't do this stuff all the time.

An Hon. Member: Texting.

Ms Blakeman: Texting. Thank you. With texting, with e-mails, with Twitter, with Facebook. Maybe that's why I don't know.

I'll tell you what's happening increasingly to me and to my caucus. There is this demand from government for instant turnaround. I'm increasingly getting e-mails, well meaning, by the way – it's a nice offer, and I'm glad to have it; let me say that – from aids, executive assistants that are saying: "Okay. The briefing will be held at this time at this place. Please respond to us by 4 o'clock." I look at the timing on the e-mail, and it was sent at, like, 1:52. I thought: "Okay. So two hours to respond to this e-mail." Well, interestingly, at 1:52 I'm in the House, and I'm not supposed to be reading e-mails. I'm not supposed to read those e-mails until about 3 o'clock. Generally, I tend to be on duty a lot. I'm dealing with what's in front of me in the session, so I'm not always hooked up to that electronic media and aware of all these messages that have come in to me. No, I'm not responding by 4 o'clock. I'm not trying to be difficult; I just didn't know there was a message there.

There is this sort of, you know, "Get with it, pick it up, let's go," that I can't keep up with. I mean, I know you guys don't much care that we have less staff than you do and we do much more of the duties ourselves, but that is what happens. So for me to be able to (a) have enough time to go back and keep checking to see if there's been a request for a meeting – I'm sorry; it's not a request for a meeting. It's: the meeting will be held at this time. We used to have a much more genial relationship, in which it was: "We'd like to have a meeting. When is everyone available?" Now it's: "The meeting will be at this time at this date. If you can't make it, drop dead." They don't actually say that, but it's pretty brusque. Let me put it that way: pretty brusque. So there's that timing thing and the expectation that, one, we will always be available to read messaging and, two, that we are available with sort of less than 24 hours' notice to go and do this.

Now, the point of starting the briefings was actually an agreement between the now Premier, when he was Government House Leader, and myself, and that was because we were getting legislation that was being introduced – at that point the bills were introduced before question period. It was not unheard of – it was actually fairly routine – for the government to then be putting the bills on the floor that afternoon. So we had no idea what was in the bill. We didn't have time to read it, to do any research. The stress levels were enormous. The staff were running around back at the Annex trying to figure out, you know, how to help us.

4:40

They got a lot of debate from me that started out with me picking up the bill and just figuring out how I was going to work my way through 20 minutes in order to stall long enough for someone to come up with some real information back at the Annex and run it over here and give it to one of my colleagues.

For some reason the then Government House Leader was not appreciative of my 20 minutes of careful questioning of the bill. So there was an agreement that the government ministers would make an attempt to brief the opposition members in advance so that that kind of, well, stalling, which was what I was having to do until we could get information, would not need to happen. That's what this came from. But, interestingly, that process of accommodation of two sides and working together has now devolved into this finger-snapping, "Get on with it, toots," kind of command. I do appreciate the offer, but the timelines are very difficult to adhere to and to work with.

The second part of this is that yesterday I spoke about how miscellaneous statutes had disappeared and now the government was doing just statutes amendment acts because the animal, the entity, known as miscellaneous statutes required a negotiation with the Official Opposition – but it's intended in consultation with all opposition members – and there was an ability to veto, to pull out any act that was being changed in miscellaneous statutes. Clearly, the government didn't want to use that particular process anymore, so they've just dropped the "miscellaneous" off the front, and now they have a statutes amendment act, and now it's subject to full debate and hoisting motions.

The problem for us is that to have this on notice on a Thursday, tabled before the House for first reading on a Monday, a briefing at 11:30 on Tuesday, and an expectation that I'm going to be debating this fulsomely and with a good amount of careful thought put into it by Tuesday afternoon is simply an impossibility. It is not that there is any one thing that I adamantly disagree with in this statutes amendment act per se. It's just the whole process that is troubling for me. I like to come in here well prepared. I like to know what I'm talking about. I like to know what you're talking about, and I want to do a good job in here. That's what I'm paid to do, and I'm responsible back to my constituents to be doing that good job, and I can't do that good job under these kinds of timelines.

Am I willing to support a hoist from the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona? Yes, in that I'm trying to help drive the point forward. I know that government is in a big hurry and that they don't want to spend any time in here and all of the other stuff that goes wrong for them. You know, with respect, I don't care. I want to do a good job, and I can't do a good job. I do actually get the real bill, and I sit down, and I go through it. I actually compare the whole section, not just the little bit that they give you in a bill that kind of shows you – I look at the whole bill and the context of the sections that it's in so that I actually understand where this is coming from and what the context is.

I can't do that with 16 bills. It just isn't possible in the time that I was given to do that in, so I'm kind of flailing. You know, I was saying, "Well, the freehold mines and minerals: maybe it's this, or maybe it's that; I don't know." Even, you know, when the Government House Leader was quite put out and said, "You know, come on; I did this briefing, and you guys could have asked me any questions," I had no questions to ask because I had not been able to read my way through the bill at that point.

I went into a briefing not having read the bill, not because I didn't want to, but we were busy. We all are here. So I was even flailing around, kind of going, "Okay," and he's talking about this act and that act, and I'm flipping back and forth on the pages trying to find it while he's talking about it. Did I have questions for him? No, because I hadn't even read the bill. Not that he didn't give us the opportunity, but given the timelines involved, no, I didn't have any questions because I didn't have time to formulate those questions with good research that supported them.

In the end, I have to go back to the very sage advice that I was given by a predecessor named Nick Taylor, who was a former leader of the Alberta Liberal Party, who said in his inimitable way: "If you are not 100 per cent behind a bill, don't vote for it. If you don't understand what they're proposing, don't vote for it; vote no." So in this case, although there are things that I really am excited about like the gender neutral language that I've been trying so hard to get – and I'm even excited about the transgender changes. I take the point that it's still under regulations, but, you know, guys, it's hard to drag this government over that line into new concepts, and I'm happy just to have dragged them a little bit over the line. Sometimes I don't get everything that I want.

Sometimes it's a glass half full. In this case, I'm going to take the glass half full.

There are other things that I really don't know, and as a result of not knowing whether it's okay or not and being able to know that because I did the research for it, I'm going to have to vote no to the whole bill, and that really burns me. That really frustrates me. I know that the government has a honking huge majority – well, congratulations – but this is still a democracy, and it does still operate on the principle of alternative points of view and accountability and transparency and, frankly, time. We don't sit in this Assembly very much. Sitting at night isn't always going to give us the extra time to be able to comply with what we're being asked to do by the next day.

I hope there is a better understanding on the other side now of some of the time pressures that have sort of morphed into your daily way of working. I don't know how it got there because it wasn't always there. But the expectations are certainly there now, and it's made it much more difficult – I'll speak for myself – for me to do a good job on this side, and that's really important to me.

So, no, I won't be supporting the bill, and that's why, because I don't understand and know what's in it, and I didn't have time to do it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any other members who wish to speak on amendment HA?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment to third reading of Bill 12 lost]

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

Bill 11
Child, Youth and Family Enhancement
Amendment Act, 2014

Mr. Campbell: Madam Speaker, I'll move third reading of Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members who wish to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

Mr. Campbell: Madam Speaker, I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:50 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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