



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

Issue 2

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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

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Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)
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 Official Opposition House Leader
Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (Ind)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bhardwaj, Hon. Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
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 New Democrat Opposition Whip
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
 Liberal Opposition House Leader
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Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Campbell, Hon. Robin, West Yellowhead (PC)
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Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)
Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
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Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)
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Horne, Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)
Horner, Doug, Spruce Grove-St. Albert (PC)
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Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),
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Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND)
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McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC)
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),
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Oberle, Hon. Frank, Peace River (PC),
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Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)
Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)
Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)
Prentice, Hon. Jim, PC, QC, Calgary-Foothills (PC),
 Premier
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),
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Scott, Hon. Donald, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (PC),
 Deputy Government House Leader
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL),
 Leader of the Liberal Opposition
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),
 Leader of the Official Opposition
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip
VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (PC),
 Government Whip
Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W),
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61 Wildrose: 16 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 1

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Donald Scott	Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education
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Eggen	Quadri
Hehr	Rogers
Horne	Rowe
Kennedy-Glans	Sarich
Lemke	Stier
Luan	

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Casey

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Lukaszuk
Barnes	Mason
Ellis	Sherman
Horner	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Olesen

Deputy Chair: Mr. Pedersen

Cusanelli	McAllister
Eggen	Quest
Fenske	Rodney
Fox	Sandhu
Fritz	Swann
Jablonski	Weadick
Leskiw	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Jeneroux

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Fritz	McDonald
Griffiths	Sherman
Johnson, L.	Towle
Lukaszuk	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Bilous	Rowe
Brown	Stier
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Fritz	Xiao
Jablonski	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Calahasen	Pedersen
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Casey	Saskiw
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Kang	Wilson
Olesen	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Amery	Jeneroux
Barnes	Luan
Bilous	Pastoor
Donovan	Sandhu
Hehr	Sarich
Horne	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Allen	Casey
Anglin	Fraser
Bikman	Johnson, L.
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Brown	Xiao
Calahasen	Young
Cao	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, as we begin this first week of work in this Assembly, help us to proceed with the respect and honour that our institution deserves, and fill our hearts and minds with wisdom and determination to always do what is right for our constituents, for our province, and indeed for our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who have shared the burdens connected to public office and public service.

Today I would like to welcome members and/or representatives of the Stevens family, the Hutton family, and the Diachuk family, all of whom I will introduce to you a bit later. In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the Alexander family, with whom we have been in contact but none of whom were able to join us in person today. Nonetheless, we know they are here with us in spirit.

Mr. Ronald Gordon Stevens, QC
September 17, 1949, to May 13, 2014

The Speaker: In 1997 Mr. Ron Stevens was elected to serve as the Member for Calgary-Glenmore in this Assembly. Prior to his election he had a successful career as a civil litigation lawyer and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1996. He served in this Assembly for 12 years and held the positions of minister of gaming, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, and Deputy Premier from 2007 through 2009. With his strong work ethic and keen intellect, Mr. Stevens made many contributions to our province through this Assembly. Of particular note, he sponsored the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act. He also introduced the private member's bill which ultimately gave us our official dress tartan. Mr. Stevens resigned in May of 2009 to continue to serve Albertans as a justice of the Court of Queen's Bench.

Mr. Drew Hutton
October 8, 1953, to August 18, 2014

The Speaker: Mr. Drew Hutton served as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora from 2001 until 2004. Prior to being elected, he was the executive director of the Glenrose Foundation from 1998 to 2000 and held various roles within the Alberta civil service for almost 20 years. Mr. Hutton believed in giving back to the community and worked with many charities and organizations, including the Kidney Foundation and the United Way. He was an accomplished Masters runner and volunteered with the Edmonton Festival Marathon Society and with the Edmonton 2001 ITU triathlon championship committee. Most recently Mr. Hutton was serving as the director of U.S.A. trade and investment in the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Bill Wasyl Diachuk
October 8, 1929, to October 17, 2014

The Speaker: Mr. Bill Diachuk served as the Member for Edmonton Beverly from 1971 until 1986. In his first term he was elected as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees and served in that role until 1975. In 1979 he was appointed minister responsible for workers' health, safety, and compensation and held that position for seven years.

Throughout his life Mr. Diachuk was actively involved in the community. He served as a separate school trustee, volunteered with numerous organizations and associations, assisted farmers as far away as Brazil to set up sustainable herbal tea crops, and helped build a children's park and a lung clinic in Lviv, Ukraine. Over the years Mr. Diachuk received many honours, including the Michael Luchkovich award, the Shevchenko medal, the Stars of Alberta award, and was made an officer brother within the Order of St. John.

Mr. Robert Keith Alexander
July 23, 1930, to November 12, 2014

The Speaker: Born in Vulcan, Alberta, Mr. Keith Alexander was elected as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud on November 2, 1982, and served until November 5, 1985. In 1,100 days of service in the 20th Legislature Mr. Alexander made his presence known by chairing the committee on regulatory reform and by sitting on numerous other committees. Mr. Alexander was a former champion amateur golfer whose many victories secured him a place in both the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame in 1985 and in the Alberta sports hall of fame in 1986. Of particular note was the invitation, which he honoured, to play in the Masters alongside Byron Nelson.

In a moment of silent prayer I would ask you to remember Mr. Stevens, Mr. Hutton, Mr. Diachuk, and Mr. Alexander as you may have known them. Please rise.

O Lord, grant rest eternal unto each of them, and let light perpetual shine ever upon them. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, continuing onward, we have with us today members and/or representatives from the Stevens, Hutton, and Diachuk families, and I would ask that they rise and remain standing as I call their names, and then we can welcome them all at the end with our thanks through our applause.

Representing the Stevens family is Jeremy Chorney, long-time family friend of the family, of course, and of former member Ron Stevens.

Representing the Hutton family are Marcy Hutton, wife of former member Drew Hutton; Mackenzie Hutton, daughter of Mr. Hutton; Jordan Schell, nephew of Mr. Hutton; Stacy Schell, niece of Mr. Hutton; Jodi Schell, sister-in-law of Mr. Hutton; and Andrew Keats, family friend of Mr. Hutton.

Representing the Diachuk family are Ollie Diachuk, wife of former member Bill Diachuk; Teresa Diachuk, daughter of Mr. Diachuk; and Brenda Diachuk, daughter of Mr. Diachuk.

We also want to reach out to the Alexander family, whom I referred to earlier, none of whom, unfortunately, were able to join us today. Nonetheless, please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you and with all.

Please join me in welcoming and thanking our guests. [applause]

1:40 Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: We have school groups, that are traditionally first, and I think we have the hon. Minister of Health ready to make an introduction, followed by Sherwood Park.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a group of 37 grade 6 students from Monsignor William Irwin Catholic school in the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, who are seated in the public gallery. These students are here this week to participate in the Legislature school. Their teacher, Mr. Nick Freeman, and a parent, Mike Smith, are joining them. I ask the students and their teacher from Monsignor William Irwin elementary school to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from this Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 58 grade 6 students, very bright and talented grade 6 students, from St. Theresa Catholic middle school. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Kurt Davison and Ms Stefanie Kaiser, and by Cathy Kennard, Trinity Senuk, and Vanessa Jans. I ask that the group from St. Theresa Catholic school please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?
If not, let us move on to the next category of important friends, guests, and acquaintances and begin with the hon. Premier, who, I believe, has an introduction to make.

Mr. Prentice: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also acknowledge the family and friends of Ron Stevens, Drew Hutton, Bill Diachuk, and Keith Alexander together with the other guests.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you Mrs. Karen Prentice. Mrs. Prentice is my spouse of 31 years, as you may have guessed. She is a successful personal lawyer in her own right. She has succeeded, while I have been occupied with other matters, in raising three daughters and is now providing the same leadership to raising two grandchildren. She also sits on a number of charitable boards in Alberta and, indeed, across the country. I would ask Karen to please rise – I would not be here without her – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. Would you like me to do them one right after the other?

My first introduction. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly Charlene Preston. Charlene is my constituency assistant in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. She's a friend, she's an adviser, and honestly I could not do as good a job as I do without her help. If Charlene could stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it truly is an honour and a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House three very special members of my own family: our daughter Jessica, who is here and has taught me more about kindness than I will ever know; our daughter Madison, who is an amazing spirit and a member of the seventh squadron Penhold air cadets and who

won the top cadet at summer camp this summer before Penhold closed; and, of course, my mom, Bertha, who has always stood beside me in hard times, good times, knows I'm not perfect and that I make lots of mistakes but who has always been proud of me and makes me want to work harder each and every day. I would ask all of you to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, followed by the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be associated with a great group of people who work in my department. They're very outward looking, and they deal with Albertans every day. They are trained by a group of people within my department who are here today, 16 people from my ag-industry extension and training branch. I'd like to call their names, and they can rise as I call them and stay standing. They are Lois Hameister, Susan Lacombe, Chris Onciul, Karen Carle, Eugene Balogh, Stephanie Irvine, Deb Ratcliff, Charles Young, Mark Kelly, John Gillmore, Lee Harper, Caitlynn Reesor, Barb Shackel-Hardman, Lori McRae, Sharon Stollery, and Cameron Horner. These people do great work for the people of the province of Alberta and our department. I'd like to thank them and welcome them here today. I'd ask my colleagues to join in welcome with the traditional welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, followed by the leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very important people in my life. In fact, if it weren't for them, I don't think I would be here. I'd like to introduce my parents, Brian and Gay Fawcett, who have come here for the throne speech and to watch question period today. They successfully raised three boys – I don't know how they did it sometimes – with a tremendous amount of sacrifice, compassion, and understanding. I know that we don't always say it enough, but, Mom and Dad, I love you and thank you for being here. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Alberta Liberals I would like to thank the families of Drew Hutton, Ron Stevens, Bill Diachuk, and Mr. Alexander for sharing them with the province of Alberta. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, and you have our sincerest condolences.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mark Hercina and Trudy Ng. Mark and Trudy are correctional peace officers from Red Deer. Mark sits on the pension committee with AUPE and is a member of local 3. Trudy is a secretary for local 3, chapter 12. Mark and Trudy are hard-working employees of this great province. As AUPE members they represent the thousands of employees that keep our province safe. Their focus on pension rights illustrates their commitment to serving this province. On behalf of the Alberta Liberals of the Legislature I would ask Mark and Trudy to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the Member for Calgary-West.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my very special guests, Ray Martin and Raj Pannu. It's a great honour for me to have both Ray and Raj here today to show their support during my first question period as leader of Alberta's NDP. No pressure there at all. Of course, my guests are no strangers to this House. Ray Martin was leader of our party from 1984 to 1994, with Raj leading the charge from 2000 to 2004. Just like my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, they have both left tremendous legacies for me to follow. I'm grateful to have three former leaders as my friends and mentors to help me settle into my new role. I would now like both Ray and Raj to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my guests, Mr. Ron Liepert and Ms Lisa Davis. Former Alberta Finance minister and former Calgary-West representative Mr. Liepert is no stranger to this Assembly and will be continuing his political career as the Conservative candidate for the new riding of Calgary Signal Hill in the next federal election. Ms Davis managed my by-election campaign and is a recognized community leader and a strong advocate for school infrastructure in Calgary-West. My guests are seated in the members' gallery, and I would now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you two gentlemen who are visiting all the way from Faisalabad, Pakistan: the physician Dr. Najaf Gill, followed by his nephew who is a local entrepreneur. I would request that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

1:50 Statement by the Speaker

Rotation for Questions and Members' Statements Questions to Members Other than Ministers

The Speaker: Hon. members, the clock reads 1:50. That means we have to start question period. However, before we proceed with the daily Routine and the first question period of this session, I'm obliged to make a brief statement about changes in the rotation for Oral Question Period and for Members' Statements and the role of legislative secretaries in this Assembly. This statement is further to my November 10, 2014, memo to all members, which included the projected sitting days calendar and the Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotations for the Third Session of the 28th Legislature. I note that my office has not received a House leaders' agreement varying the rotations outlined in the attachments to that memo, so we will proceed on the basis of those rotations.

The change to the rotations since last session is made necessary by the changes in caucus membership. The only difference from the standings when the House leaders' agreement on rotations was

reached in May 2012 is that there is one independent member, who was formerly a member of the Wildrose caucus. In keeping with the practice of an independent member being entitled to ask one question per sitting week, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre will be able to ask the sixth question on day 4 of the rotation, which will be Monday, November 24, as today is officially day 1 in the rotation.

The Official Opposition is entitled to the first three questions each day, the Liberal caucus is entitled to the fourth question, and the ND caucus is entitled to the fifth question. The Official Opposition may ask the sixth question each day except for day 4 in the rotation, when it will be the turn of the aforementioned Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. The Official Opposition will be entitled to ask the eighth, 12th, 14th, and 16th questions each day. Members of the government caucus will be entitled to ask the ninth, 13th, 15th, and 17th questions each day. The Liberal caucus may ask the 10th question each day, and the ND caucus the 11th question. The 18th question will rotate, with the Official Opposition entitled to ask it on days 1 and 3 of the rotation – that would be today and Thursday – with the government caucus asking it on day 2, and the Liberal caucus being entitled to the 18th question on day 4 of the rotation.

With respect to the rotation for Members' Statements this has also been modified to provide for one statement for the independent member every three weeks. This is reflected on the projected sitting days calendar that I sent to you under cover of my November 10, 2014, memo.

I should also point out that there is a motion on the Order Paper for the sitting to be extended past December 4, 2014. If this motion passes, there will be a new projected sitting days calendar issued and sent to everyone.

Another difference from the last time the Assembly met is that there are now four legislative secretaries and one special adviser, who have been appointed by the government. I want to reaffirm past Speakers' rulings that have been made on the role of legislative secretaries and/or similar positions. Essentially, as the occupants of these offices are not members of the Executive Council, they are not entitled to respond to questions during Oral Question Period on matters of government policy.

As my predecessor Speaker Kowalski said on April 16, 2008, at page 13 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day, "Without detracting from the work they perform, for the purposes of the Assembly members occupying these positions are considered private members as opposed to the government." The point of Oral Question Period is to hold the government to account. Legislative secretaries are not members of Executive Council and therefore cannot respond to questions on behalf of the government. Speaker Schumacher made the same point, and you can find that at page 2854 of *Alberta Hansard* for November 7, 1994.

If members have any questions about the rotations or any other matters, for that matter, regarding things in this statement that I've just said, I would encourage you to contact my office as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I hope you'll indulge me with a few extra seconds on the clock to first congratulate the Premier on winning the leadership of his party and securing his seat.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Ms Smith: The Premier claims that we are now under new management, so I will keep this simple and ask him the first question that I asked in the Assembly to the member who was the head of the old management. With oil heading towards \$70 a barrel, this government will have a multibillion-dollar hole in its budget. How will the Premier get out of this budget hole? Will it be by increasing the deficit, by raising our taxes, or by wiping out what's left of our savings?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Prentice: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just respond by thanking the hon. member for her warm and generous welcome. We have all as members of the Assembly arrived here in different ways, on different personal journeys, but we all are here to serve the interests of Albertans. I look very much forward to working with the hon. member and indeed all members of the House. As we've seen in the throne speech, this government tends to be very focused on the desires and wishes of Albertans, and I look forward to working together to achieve exactly that.

If you might indulge me, then, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the question, Albertans are already the lowest taxed people in the country by far. This is an enormous advantage, which we intend to maintain.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I just want a little more clarity on that answer because the pundits are speculating that the Premier is considering new revenue streams. That is code for new taxes. As his party has indicated, they believe Albertans should be paying for all sorts of new things like driving down a highway. Will the Premier assure Albertans that he won't create any new taxes or raise any of our current taxes to pay for his spending promises?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, what I have said publicly and will continue to say is that \$75-per-barrel oil represents a low-price environment, that every single family and businessperson in this province is well aware of. This is not business as usual. This will require some tough decisions on the part of the government. Our government will bring forward an update specifically on the finances of the province relative to this position in the current fiscal year. That will be done by the Minister of Finance in the week ahead. It will provide Albertans with a very clear picture of the current fiscal situation. It is a time for prudence and caution.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, you see that he didn't say no when I asked that question.

There were also a lot of spending promises in the by-elections as well as yesterday's throne speech. However, the throne speech did say that the government will maintain the sustainability fund, which, of course, suggests that they won't be dipping into our savings. So it's either going to be higher taxes or more debt or both. Now, the Premier used to be a senior banker. Will he tell us how much debt he thinks it would be prudent for Albertans to take on?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. I think the best authority on matters relating to banking is probably Moody's Investors Service, which today actually issued a report concerning the creditworthiness of our province and made the very specific observation that even prices as low as \$60 per barrel for west Texas intermediate crude carried through for the entire year of 2015-2016, as a hypothetical, would not impair the triple-A credit rating of the province of Alberta. That's

fiscal strength. We intend to maintain that through prudence and discipline.

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

Ms Smith: I can summarize that, Mr. Speaker. I guess I would say that it's yes to both more taxes and more debt.

Property Rights

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, all summer we heard the Premier declare that he truly understands property rights and that he would fix this government's past mistakes. Just yesterday he rose in this Assembly and made the same promises, and we were hopeful. Albertans were hopeful. Then we saw the seven-word sentence which is the text of Bill 1. Does the Premier actually believe that one act, that has never even been proclaimed, is the totality of what this government needs to do to fix and protect Albertans' property rights?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. This hon. member does believe that the land assembly act is a piece of legislation that is overreaching and should be repealed. Of course, that is the effect of Bill 1.

More than that, however, Mr. Speaker, as this matter proceeds to committee, the two reports of Alberta's Property Rights Advocate from 2012 and 2013 will be referred to the committee. I would expect the committee and indeed all of the parliamentarians who are assembled here to work together to arrive at solutions that respect the process that the government has been through but also the process that the Property Rights Advocate has recommended.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that when this government thinks that your property rights might get in the way of what they want to do, they write legislation that allows the cabinet to take away your rights without due process and without full, fair, and timely compensation. They did that with the bills commonly known as Bill 50, Bill 36, Bill 24, and Bill 2, among others. Why isn't the Premier addressing the real issues now that he has the chance?

2:00

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to fair and just and timely compensation, as one who practised law in this area for over 20 years would observe, it really is the provisions of Alberta's Expropriation Act and the Surface Rights Act which require examination. This is what the Property Rights Advocate has recommended. This is certainly what I have heard over the course of the summer in this province. Those are two pieces of legislation where very specific recommendations will be before the committee relative to how to move forward. That's the essence of Bill 1, to arrive carefully, with the work of everyone in this Legislature, at how to deal with property rights in our province.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, Bill 36 overrides those acts, and as a lawyer the Premier should know that.

On property rights it is clear that the Premier has overpromised and underdelivered, but it's not too late. My colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka will be introducing a private member's motion that would enshrine property rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for Alberta. If it passes, a similar motion will be debated in Ottawa. If the Premier is sincere about protecting property rights in Alberta, he can declare his support

for this constitutional change right now. So how about it, Premier? Are you sincere?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is, as the hon. member has observed, my first day in this parliamentary session; however, I have been in other parliamentary sessions. I would observe that it's good practice to actually comment in this Chamber upon legislation once it's introduced, and I intend to do that once it's put forward. My record over the course of a lifetime in advocating on behalf of landowners and property rights, dealing with the legislative framework that we have in this province is very clear. That is a path that I continue to pursue and pursue as leader of this government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. leader for her third and final set of main questions.

Ms Smith: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The motion has been introduced; it's on the Order Paper today.

School Construction

Ms Smith: In his very first speech this Premier asked Albertans to judge his government on the progress it will make. To help the Premier, I will regularly ask him about his progress, so let me start with schools. So far they've built only 18 of Premier Stelmach's 22 promised schools. Only one of Premier Redford's 50 promised schools is actually under construction, and this Premier has now promised another 55 schools. Can the Premier tell us how his new management team will actually get schools built when the same managers haven't been able to get the job done?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, firstly, as the Premier of this province I have very strong views about the need to build schools and to properly educate our children and to ensure that we have classroom space. So I have spoken very definitively to this, and one need only look at the throne speech of the government to get a sense of the commitments which the government has made and intends to stand by. The ministers of my government have been instructed to proceed on that path. At this point in time across the province we are engaged in the largest construction project relative to public schools in Canadian history. It is a challenging job. We have excellent ministers, that are hands-on, that are dealing with this.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has promised to have nearly all of the new schools announced by Premiers Redford and Stelmach ready for the 2016 school year. Now, that's on top of all of the major renovations that were also promised, but this government has only succeeded in actually building 18 of those schools in the last four years. Can the Premier tell us exactly how his new management team is going to complete the remaining 49 schools in just 23 months?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the hon. member to watch and learn from the process. In the hands of very capable ministers, including the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Education, and other ministers, we will be well along. There are innovations that are being made, and these schools will be constructed in the way that has been projected.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I seem to recall Premier Redford saying exactly the same thing.

If you peruse the list of promised school projects on Alberta Infrastructure's website, you'll see that most of these promised 49 schools don't specify the construction or design method. Most haven't been designed. Only a few are at the tender stage, and only one is under construction although there have been several sod turnings. Isn't the Premier afraid that when Albertans judge his progress on schools, they will find that he has overpromised and underdelivered?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I trust in the judgment of Albertans always, as I did in the recent by-elections, and the hon. member can do the same. We've struck a very specific cabinet committee that will supervise the construction of these school projects. Nothing is more important to all of us who sit in this Legislative Assembly than ensuring that we have classrooms for our children. We'll be moving ahead with the construction projects which have been put forward. I trust the ministers to execute on this; I know that they will do so effectively. Over the course of the next several years 78,000 new classroom spaces will be opened.

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

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back. Congratulations and welcome to the Premier and the newly elected government members.

Government Policies

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks a lot about ending entitlements and sweetheart contracts, restoring public trust, and making appointments based on merit, yet his very first act as Premier was to appoint his buddies as emissaries to Saskatchewan, Washington, and Hong Kong. To the Premier: given your recent record how can you expect Albertans to believe that this talk of new management is anything more than just slick Tory talk all over again?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, if I might just speak firstly of Mr. Merrifield, who is Alberta's representative in Washington, there is a critical vote taking place on the Keystone pipeline at 3:30 today, Mountain Standard Time. This is a vote which is critical to our province. It may or may not be the end of that process, but it is critical to the future of Alberta. Mr. Merrifield is infinitely capable as the most expert person in terms of these affairs in Washington. He agreed to set aside his life and serve Albertans in that position and, frankly, is doing an exceptional job.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, apparently only friends can make critical decisions.

The Premier said that his decisions would be based on sound conservative fiscal principles. When plans for a diversion canal and a dry reservoir west of Calgary were announced, the government said that it would wait for a robust economic appraisal by engineers before deciding if it would proceed, yet just three days before the by-election the Premier jumped the gun and announced that the project was a go. To the Premier: why didn't you wait until you had all the facts before you made this huge decision? Was this sound fiscal planning or just a by-election tactic?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps because of changes to our climate, perhaps climatic circumstances, the weather has changed, and we are seeing more risk of flooding in southern Alberta, particularly in spring with the thaw. What's important in the river basins which we're speaking of – the Bow basin, the

Elbow basin, and the Highwood basin – is that we undertake flood mitigation projects which are environmentally defensible, which are cost-effective, and which can be actioned quickly because on my watch as Premier I do not want to see another flood in any of the communities that were affected in 2013. That's the purpose of these projects.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, nobody in this building wants to see another flood, and we all want to make the right decision.

Recently, the Calgary board of education put out a top 10 list of their modular school projects, yet the then unelected Minister of Education used his position to announce the approval of two modular classrooms in the very riding that he was running for public office in. The folks charged with running the education system, the CBE, were not even aware of it and ranked six other projects as higher needs. To the Premier: how does this decision reflect on your promise to do things differently? Isn't this the same sort of political trickery that characterized previous PC governments?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. This government is concerned and listens to the priorities of Albertans. That is the value that drives the decisions that we make, whether it comes to building new schools, whether it comes to modular programs for our school boards, whether it comes to maintenance funding for schools that need attention. That's my priority as Minister of Education, to ensure that we're responding to the needs of parents.

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

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to join other members in offering my congratulations to the Premier on his new post.

However, I would also like to remind him that his authority today depends entirely on the election of his caucus on a very clear set of promises, not the least of which was a commitment to end child poverty, a subject which was ignored in yesterday's throne speech. This government has broken an unending list of commitments to Alberta families, and thus far it looks like the record will continue. So my question to the Premier is this. The old management broke promises, and now this management is breaking promises. How is that new management?

2:10

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I similarly welcome the hon. member to this Legislative Assembly in her current role.

Child poverty is of concern to all of us and certainly of concern to myself as Premier, and this is something that we intend to deal with. Now, this was a matter that I touched upon in terms of aboriginal issues in the throne speech. We are very concerned about the circumstances of aboriginal children, particularly in an urban context. I think the throne speech could not have been clearer about the importance of dealing with those issues, the importance of education for aboriginal children but also making sure that these issues are . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, first supplemental.

Ms Notley: The throne speech was clear on not talking about the plan to end child poverty in five years. That's what was clear.

Now, two and a half years ago Albertans voted for 50 new schools; not one has been built. They voted for more access to postsecondary education and, instead, got much less. They voted for 5,000 seniors places and will get about half of that. My question to the Premier: do you or do you not believe that you are

responsible for implementing the platform your caucus was elected on?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that the throne speech was very clear on the five priorities that this government is focused on: a focused commitment to ensuring that we have sound conservative fiscal principles, to ensuring that we restore public trust, end entitlements, to a focus on our natural resources, to a focus as well on being an environmental leader, but most importantly and significantly to a focus upon the people's priorities, and they include education, they include health care, and they include the living circumstances of people in our urban communities.

Ms Notley: So it appears to me the answer is no.

After promising not to be your father's PC Party, it looks like dad is back in charge. Albertans need to decrease their expectations. They shouldn't count on PC promises of the past, and after 43 years in government no one could ever have predicted that oil prices might fluctuate. This story is as old as the hills, almost as old as this government. Why should Albertans believe anything coming from this government when breaking promises is just business as usual?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, over the course of the past six months I have criss-crossed this province, firstly campaigning for the leadership of my party, more recently in the by-elections, which I would also refer this hon. member to. Over the course of that time the priorities of Albertans have been made very clear to me. We have been listening to Albertans. The throne speech, which we tabled yesterday, could not have been clearer that we are responding directly to the priorities of Albertans when it comes to the issues that concern them relative to their quality of life: education, health care, attending to senior citizens, and the quality of our life in urban and rural Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you for observing the 35-second rule.

We'll now proceed to question 6. No preambles after this, please. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Hospital Occupancy Rates

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February of 2012 the Health Quality Council released a report on emergency department overcrowding. It said clearly: reduce hospital occupancy rates to below 85 per cent, or you're putting patients at risk. Back then the government accepted this recommendation, and they pledged action, yet hospitals across this province today routinely run at 110 per cent capacity, emergency departments are jammed, and surgeries are being cancelled. To the Minister of Health: why is patient safety still at risk two and a half years after Albertans were promised action?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, recently the government of Alberta issued applications for new long-term care facilities, which allowed us to look at how we're using acute-care beds in hospitals. We're moving people from there into long-term care beds. This will allow us to open up facilities for those individuals that are dealing with the concerns of emergency facilities. Those emergency departments will then have 20 per cent set aside so that people can move into the departments in a way that they'll be properly taken care of.

Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: No, Minister.

Well, even the CEO of Alberta Health Services doubts that your plan will work. Given that the day after your announcement she said, and I'm going to quote: truly, I don't think we'll ever get to the 85 per cent occupancy rate, but if we can smooth it out where we have 98 per cent occupancy and then there's an occasional blip where we have too many patients, well, that would be better. Minister, are jammed hospitals and blips in the system really the best Albertans can hope for from an \$18 billion health care system?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that was an accurate quote of what the head of Alberta Health Services said. She has always indicated that 95 per cent would be a proper number to search for within our system.

Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: I'll be sure to send that quote to the minister, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the two-and-a-half-year-old Health Quality Council report spells out the solutions for you – reduce occupancy rates by accurately estimating the number of acute and long-term care beds required now and over the next decade – has this estimate been done, Minister, and will you table it so Albertans know what's happening?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we're in the process of valuating the long-term implications of the need for acute-care beds. We've recently set up a program where we've been able to move 750 people out of acute care into long-term care beds. The start of that process will continue as we move down the process in order to create more acute-care beds as a result of the development of long-term care facilities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

Keystone Pipeline Project

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier on behalf of the people of Calgary-West. We know that market access is critical for this province because it's important to get our oil to customers who need it. One of those opportunities is the Keystone pipeline in the United States. What has your government done to advocate for this important project given that it faces a critical vote in the U.S. Senate today?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, our prosperity in this province depends very much upon our access to the most integrated energy marketplace in the world. And I would just say that there will be a vote today at 3:30 in the U.S. Senate on Keystone. The results are uncertain as we speak at this point in time.

We have been working together with members of the American legislative branch. Specifically, I spoke yesterday with Senator Heidi Heitkamp, who is a Democrat senator and a cosponsor of the bill, and also with Senator Hoeven, who is a cosponsor of the bill, which is in the Senate. We remain hopeful and optimistic, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. My first supplemental, Mr. Speaker, is again to the Premier. If the Keystone vote in the Senate is successful today, what are your next steps to get Alberta oil to market?

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, it's a hypothetical question, but proceed.

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, this is a project which is certainly in the interests of our province and our country. It's also a project which is in the interests, I would submit, of the United States of America since under the free trade agreement our prosperity is based upon this project and our integrated energy system.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that we have other allies in the United States: Governor Christie. Of course, the governor of New Jersey will be coming to Alberta on December 4. I'll be meeting with him. We'll continue to work in a constructive way with senators, governors, and representatives in the United States.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Final supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my second supplemental is again to the Premier. If the Keystone vote is not successful in the Senate today, what are your next steps to get Alberta bitumen to U.S. refineries?

The Speaker: Again, there's some hypothesis in there, but please proceed with your answer anyway.

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, market forces have of course continued to be inexorable. Canadian oil, Alberta oil, indeed, is making its way through to the Gulf coast by rail, and this will continue to be the case. The real debate in the context of the Keystone pipeline is not whether Canadian oil will be carried by market forces to the Gulf coast but whether it will be carried in the most safe and efficient mechanism possible, which is by pipeline.

So we remain optimistic. We will see what happens in the days ahead, but we remain cautiously optimistic, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Education minister. Might I start by congratulating the minister on his election victory and welcoming him to the Chamber.

2:20

School Construction

(continued)

Mr. McAllister: Since the last election, Mr. Speaker, this government has promised to build 105 new schools in the province: 50 from the former Premier, 55 from the current Premier. I'd like to ask the Education minister: of those specific 105 schools announced since 2012, how many of them are under construction, not in the planning stage but under construction, and is that cause for concern?

Mr. Dirks: I thank the member opposite for his important question. One of the things that this government has said is a top priority is to ensure that we are responding to the growing enrolment pressures that Alberta is facing as we have 40,000 new people moving to our province every year, and that equates to 18,000 children and 25 new schools that we need every year going forward. So we have made a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the pressures that are before us, and we will continue to do that in the years ahead.

Mr. McAllister: The number is somewhere around zero, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the price of oil is now south of \$75 a barrel, a lot of people are skeptical of this government's promises. In fact, their own members are skeptical, given that when the Premier made the school announcements, the now jobs minister said, and I quote: he's acting like a candy man handing out so many promises. Will

the minister go on record today, then, and guarantee Albertans that these 105 schools will be built and open for our kids in September of 2016 as they promised?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the parents and residents in Cochrane and in Airdrie, where we just turned sod on three new schools, believe that we are moving in the right direction, and so do the parents and the teachers and the students in the many other communities across our province that are going to be receiving new schools in the next few years. That is our commitment. We'll continue to build. We'll continue to ensure that every community that needs a school is going to get a school. That's our priority.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, the minister is doing a lot of shovelling, but I don't think it's sod that he's turning.

During the by-election campaign he approved modulars for a school in his riding even though that school was way down the list, at number 7 on the priority list for the Calgary board of education. Albertans are cynical, calling it blatant electioneering. Boards are elected to make these decisions. Does the minister recognize that this was wrong? Will he apologize for this misuse of power and assure us that he won't do this thing going forward?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, my commitment is to ensure that we are responding to the priorities of Albertans. Now, Albertans said very clearly, "We need new schools; we need new infrastructure; we need modulars for those schools that are experiencing student enrolment pressures," and as minister I am committed to ensuring that we are responding to the priorities to Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to congratulate the Minister of Health on his election and appointment to cabinet.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Amery: Now the question. Mr. Minister, during the recent by-election campaigns in Calgary and Edmonton, health care was the number one issue on voters' minds. They told us that we do have an excellent health care system provided that they get through emergency departments. We had issues with wait times in emergency rooms when our Health budget was \$3 billion; we are still having problems with a budget of over \$18 billion. What are the minister's plans to improve the situation in our emergency rooms?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the steps we are going to take in the city of Edmonton. We've put in some transition beds, which allow ambulances to come to the facility, drop off their patients, have proper care. They'll go into transition beds so they don't have to back up the emergency departments. We're looking at contracting the delivery of transfer systems in rural areas, which allows us to have more ambulances available.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member, first supplemental.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Family care clinics were supposed to alleviate hospital emergency wait times. However, this doesn't seem to be the case. What is the minister's plan for the family care clinics?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government approved three family care clinics, and we're in the process of dealing with nine other ones. We made a decision that the professionals within the health care industry do not support family care clinics. We believe that primary care clinics are the way to go, and that's what we're going to focus on.

The Speaker: The hon. member, second supplemental.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, since many of our constituents blame the long wait times on the shortage of doctors, is the minister planning to accelerate the accreditation of foreign trained medical doctors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The College of Physicians & Surgeons is the one that accredits various physicians. We are dealing with them and trying to encourage them to bring more people in, but there is a three-month study period. It takes time, and they are the ones that approve it.

School Infrastructure Priorities

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, in the dying days of the by-election the Minister of Education circumvented the normal process of allowing school boards to set priorities for their local community and ordered two new modular classrooms to be put up at William Reid school, this despite the fact that the Calgary board of education had an extensive list of schools that needed modular classrooms ahead of William Reid, coincidentally located in Calgary-Elbow. Can the minister tell me why he made this decision that directly undercuts local autonomy of school boards?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Dirks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've indicated in the House today on a couple of occasions, a great priority of ours is to respond to the needs of Albertans, to listen carefully, to hear what they have to say, and then to ensure that we're providing the school capital infrastructure that we need, whether that's new schools, modulars, or maintenance upgrades. That's my commitment as minister, to continue to do that in collaboration with school boards across the province.

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister listens to the question this time. He's seemingly having trouble hearing today. William Reid needed modulars, but you know let's delve a little deeper. There were 16 school projects that needed modulars ahead of William Reid school, again located in Calgary-Elbow. Why was the decision made, and are you going to continue . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, over the last number of weeks we as a government have responded to numerous capital needs for schools and school boards across the province. Many of those have come to me as Minister of Education. In consultation with my cabinet colleagues, we have made the decision to respond to those that are urgent, that are critical. And we'll continue to do that, whether it's modulars, as I have indicated, whether it's new schools that need to be built, whether it's upgrades, maintenance, infrastructure renewal. We'll continue to make that our priority in the days to come.

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is categorically false. The only decision he has made is to provide two modular classrooms to William Reid school.

What other decisions have you made as Minister of Education besides that that directly saw those modular classrooms go to the Calgary-Elbow riding?

Mr. Dirks: Well, I think the member opposite for his supplemental. If he had been carefully watching what had been happening, he would know that there have been a number of announcements that have been made providing infrastructure for a variety of school boards across the province, and that includes jurisdictions like Rocky View and Calgary and others that we've been working with. Wherever there are priorities when it comes to education infrastructure, this minister and this government will be listening and will be responding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I add my congratulations to the Premier and other members who have been recently elected to this Assembly.

Postsecondary Tuition Market Modification

Mr. Mason: Since the 1990s tuition in Alberta has nearly tripled while this province continues to have the lowest postsecondary participation rate in the country. Alberta's young people are being priced out of their own advanced education system. The government put a cap on tuition in 2006, but they are again leaving the door open to even more increases through so-called market modifiers. My question is to the Premier. Will you commit to enforcing a real cap on tuition by rejecting these proposed increases, or is this just another broken promise from this PC government?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education.

Mr. Scott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. Our goal in Alberta is to have an excellent post-secondary education system, and that's exactly what we're achieving. A top-quality postsecondary education system gives our graduates the skills that they need to excel in Alberta's economy. An individual learner's education is a shared investment between taxpayers and students. Market modifiers are one tool that is used to ensure that our programs remain competitive with other top-quality programs across the country. The market modifier applications are currently under review.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for that non answer. The question is this. You put in place a cap on tuition. The post-secondary institutions are approaching you with so-called market modifiers that will jack up tuition for students at the U of A, in some cases by more than \$5,000 a year. Are you going to stick to the cap that you promised Albertans and keep the freeze on tuition, or are you going to allow the U of A and other institutions to jack up tuition to make education unaffordable for the kids of this province?

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, our goal is to have a quality education system in Alberta. That's got to be the goal of Alberta's post-secondary education system. I spent the last few months travelling

across Alberta. I've heard that from both students and from the institutions. They want to make sure that our education system maintains its quality and excels at its educational goals. One point that I want my friend to realize is that we also have a great system of funding postsecondary students. We have a great system that lets them access the money that they need so that they can get a great education in Alberta.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, we're getting quite an education here today from this minister, I'll tell you that.

This government cancelled the remission program, so student debts are higher than ever. It's clear that many Albertans can no longer afford to attend the universities and colleges that they and their parents pay taxes for, and that's just wrong, Mr. Minister. So will you take a clear stand against further tuition increases and reject these market modifier proposals? Yes or no?

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, our government invests in scholarships, bursaries, grants, and student aid to make postsecondary education accessible to those facing barriers. Once again, I'm going to repeat: we need to make sure that we have a quality education system in Alberta. That's got to be the goal. We want our students to continue to enter the workforce so that we are providing the workers that our economy needs for tomorrow, and we're going to continue that work. We have received applications for tuition modifications. Those are going to be considered carefully.

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

Mr. Anderson: Congratulations to the Finance minister as well on his new role.

Provincial Debt

Mr. Anderson: As you know, my Wildrose colleagues and I have repeatedly, almost daily, warned your government about the budget predicament we would be in if oil fell to the \$75 range. We said that the waste and mismanagement had to stop or we would be facing tens of billions in debt. Well, that day is now here, and we are staring at structural deficits that will in just a couple of years from now result in the highest provincial debt in our history. Minister, your government is responsible for putting us in this mess. How are you going to get us out?

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you Mr. Speaker. Let me start off by saying that we will balance the budget this year. Let me say that my mandate from the Premier is to make sure that we return to fiscally prudent, conservative principles in budgeting, and we'll do that.

Mr. Anderson: Sorry, Minister, but you and your government have been giving that same platitude for five years now. We need action.

Let's start with this. I brought a bill forward last year on behalf of the Wildrose that would cap severance for all government employees, not just political staffers, at \$100,000 for less than five years of work to a maximum of \$200,000 for anything over five years. It is a simple, common-sense solution that will save Alberta millions of dollars each year. Will you agree to implement that policy?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me say that right now we are in the process of looking at different efficiencies throughout

the government of Alberta, and we'll continue to work on that plan. It's a plan in progress. I would suggest that the member stay tuned for our fiscal update on November 26. We'll continue to work to make sure that we have a balanced budget moving forward and that we'll have a balanced budget for 2015 and 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Anderson: Oil is at \$70 a barrel. You need \$110 oil just to not go further into debt and balance the budget. This is a simple and straightforward way to save a lot of money without affecting front-line services. Given this Premier's commitment to ending the culture of PC entitlement, will you take the first step in doing so and commit right now to ending obscene severance packages for all government employees, including senior AHS officials and other quasi-government agencies, and not just for a few dozen political staffers? Surely you know this is the right thing.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I can't be any more clear that we are now looking at efficiencies within government. We will have a fiscal update next week, and we'll continue to work toward balancing our budget for 2015-16.

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

Education System

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The relationship over the past year between teachers and their association and our Education ministry can perhaps be best described as challenging. Can the Minister of Education tell us what actions he plans to take to restore a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with teachers and their professional association?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring a bright future for all of our children. After parents teachers are, of course, the single most important contributor to student success, and I value the excellent work our teachers do each day across the thousands of classrooms in our province. Working with education stakeholders is a very significant priority for me. I've already met with a number of them in the past weeks, and I will continue to engage with our teachers and with their representative organization to ensure that we secure a positive future for all kids.

Mrs. Sarich: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that hopes were very high for progress in meeting the needs of special-needs students after the high profile special-needs review and given that there has since been wide disappointment amongst many parents and teachers, what will the minister do to fulfill the promise of developing the full potential of students with special needs?

Mr. Dirks: I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. Every student in Alberta deserves a high-quality education, and as a national leader in education funding our commitment is strong in this regard to ensure that we are providing the kind of education we need for special-needs children. Total funding this fiscal year for special needs is over \$400 million. We trust our school boards to make the very best decisions to meet the special-needs education requirements for our children, and parents who have concerns about special-needs programming are encouraged to work with their school boards to address those issues.

Mrs. Sarich: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that the Premier and minister have made public commitments to build

substantial numbers of new schools, what steps will the minister take to ensure that school boards have the necessary financial resources to make sure that these new schools have appropriate levels of staffing?

Mr. Dirks: I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. One of our government's top priorities certainly is education and preparing our kids for the future. We will continue to invest in schools and students. We have been tasked with coming up with a long-term, stable, predictable funding plan for education. We know this is the right approach. We are a national leader in education funding. Government invests nearly \$40 million every day for our students in our schools. We'll continue to ensure that all of our new schools are appropriately staffed and that every student in those schools receives the high-quality education that they deserve.

Medical Laboratory Services in Medicine Hat

Mr. Barnes: The Medicine Hat Diagnostic Laboratory has been providing high-quality local care in Medicine Hat and Brooks for decades. This government's decision to end lab testing in this centre shows that the new PC regime still supports the same failed centralized planning methods in health care. I have a petition with 11,605 signatures, which I will be tabling later, from people upset that this centre, which serves up to a thousand patients per day, will be closing. To the minister: why have you decided to ignore the needs of more than 11,000 Albertans and move diagnostic testing in Medicine Hat?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we've invested a great deal in new facilities in the Medicine Hat hospital, and we think that that's a place where we can make sure that proper care is taken.

The Speaker: The hon. member, first supplemental.

2:40

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government incorrectly believes the decision to centralize diagnostic services in Medicine Hat may save \$5 million after start-up costs but has assigned no dollar value to these start-up costs or what could be very, very expensive re-establishing collection services throughout Forty Mile, throughout Cypress county and Medicine Hat, does the minister have a business plan to ensure his planned savings don't disappear after the costs of re-establishing collection take effect, or is he just throwing our taxpayer money away?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, the operation of the health care system is under the guise of Alberta Health Services. They are the ones that are in control of making sure that these investments are made in areas to ensure that they're done in an effective, efficient manner.

Mr. Barnes: Given that even Alberta Health Services has stated that the Medicine Hat Diagnostic Lab provided excellent, high-quality service and there doesn't seem to be a plan and given that the minister campaigned on a health care system that provided more regional control and access, will the minister really do something new, keep an election promise, and stop shutting down professional local providers in favour of more centralization?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been quite clear in his direction to myself that we are to look at how we can decentralize the system, to be able to put more services in local areas, ensure that each community has input into the system. We will continue to do that. It's my hope that we will over the next little while begin to look at how we can work with local communities to deliver greater services so that at the end of the day they feel more comfortable and more passionate about their health care system. This government is committed to community health care support. We will continue to do that. I truly believe the answer is working with communities to solve problems.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Special-needs Assistance for Seniors

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My office has been hearing from seniors who are experiencing considerable delays under programs for lower income seniors in the province. These are the special-needs assistance program and the Alberta aids to daily living program. One senior was told that consideration of assistance to replace a hot water tank would take approximately 12 weeks, then in October he was told that the program was catching up on applications from the end of July. My first two questions are for the Minister of Seniors. Why are some seniors waiting so long for decisions on their applications for special-needs assistance?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It's a good question, and I commend him on being such a great advocate for his constituents and for seniors across the province. The special-needs assistance is a great program. It's there to provide financial assistance to eligible low-income seniors, for assistance with purchasing things in their homes like hot water tanks or other things. I am advised that the process applications were taking a little bit longer throughout the summer. It generally takes three to four weeks. However, between July and October we've had heavier demand. Unfortunately, it has been taking 12 weeks, which is unacceptable, and we're taking steps to deal with that.

Dr. Brown: Hon. minister, what can be done to speed up the consideration of those applications and to make sure that those essential payments go out in a timely manner?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'd agree that that's very important. We've made changes to speed up the application process, which includes hiring additional staff. We also prioritize the applications so that we can get some of them through faster that are more critical, things like a roof replacement or a pending utility disconnection. Some of those things have a higher priority than other items that are in the queue. But, like I said, we've added staff, and we want to get the timeline to get these applications through down to a more manageable and reasonable time frame.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, my second supplemental is for the Minister of Health. What guidelines, Mr. Minister, exist for the timeliness of decisions to be made on the Alberta aids to daily living program and the payment from them?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, the aids to daily living program provides medical equipment to Albertans with disabilities and

chronic illnesses. The program has a variety of clients with special needs. The problem with the program is that these clients have special needs, and therefore it's difficult to quantify each individual, so we do that on an individual basis. For example, those with hearing aids could be done in one day, while other problems might take longer, so it's really a matter of the individual and how we can put the program to deal with their challenges.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we concluded all the introductions that were on my sheet at least. If there are any others, we could revert. Does anyone object to reverting to Introduction of Guests quickly?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, you have an introduction?

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you some great public servants, the trustees from the Calgary board of education. With us here today I think we have Joy Bowen-Eyre, the chair of the committee. We also have Lynn Ferguson, Amber Stewart, Trina Hurdman, and Pamela King. Also with them is Judy Hehr, vice-chair. While doing that job, she also serves as my mother, and she is also a grandmother to three great boys. Please rise and accept the warm applause from this House. Thank you for standing up for public education.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others? No others?

Calgary-Hawkwood, we noted that you were listed to speak and introduce some guests. For the record do you want to mention who they were? I know they've left.

Mr. Luan: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate that.

I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two hard-working and committed businessmen in Calgary's Chinatown. They both are community leaders, too. Both are well known to a number of my colleagues in this House. The first one is Mr. Peter Pat, who is the owner of the famous Peking Garden restaurant in Calgary and also the former president of the Chinese business chamber of commerce. Mr. Pat travels frequently between Shanghai and Calgary promoting business and trade between China and our province.

The second guest is Mr. Peter Lau, who is also a famous feng shui master. For those who know, that's fortune-telling. He continuously is blessing all of us in this House, working hard and making the best decisions for Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to acknowledge them. Because of a last-minute incident they couldn't make it here, but they appreciate the warm welcome from this House.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Let us proceed with Members' Statements. Calgary-Lougheed, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

Addictions Awareness

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We live in a breathtakingly beautiful province blessed with incredible, invaluable opportunities, but with this come growing pains, pitfalls, and problems. As past chair of AADAC and in the portfolio of wellness I learned first-hand of the horrors of addiction. However, we also witnessed Alberta's evolving and life-saving treatment, education, and prevention programs. I rise today to mark National Addictions Awareness Week, the focus of which is youth substance abuse prevention.

Our teenage and adult years are a crucial time of growth, change, and brain development, and substance abuse during these years can result in addictions, mental health problems, and chronic disease. Despite warnings of dangers 15- to 24-year-olds report the highest past-year use of illicit substances and are five times more likely than older adults to report harm due to drug use.

Substance abuse also costs Canadians many billions of dollars in direct health care costs every year. Thankfully, *Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy* guides the government's actions in addressing addiction and mental health issues, and our provincial wellness framework, *Health for All, Wellness for Life*, is also a leader in this respect. These strategies enhance the ability of the government to work closely with families, schools, and community partners towards reducing the impacts of addiction and mental illness.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to advancing care and services for addiction and mental illness needs while reducing and preventing substance abuse in the first place, and I encourage all Albertans to utilize the online resources of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and to join in the conversation during National Addictions Awareness Week as we consider how in the past, present, and future we prevent substance abuse amongst our precious young Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Calgary-Shaw, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Official Opposition Achievements

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2012 we in the Wildrose were asked by Albertans to serve as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and we have been diligent, focused, and principled in our service. We have done what an Official Opposition is supposed to do. We have opposed, exposed, and proposed. We have opposed on behalf of Albertans but not simply for the sake of opposing, we have exposed on behalf of Albertans what historically will be considered some of the most egregious examples of waste and mismanagement this province has ever seen, and we have proposed on behalf of Albertans, with well over 100 amendments to government legislation and through positive policies, ideas, and solutions that put Albertans first.

2:50

Recently we have seen many of our policies and good ideas put into place, implemented with great success and public appreciation. Whether it is the lunacy around the government fleet, the pettiness of the licence plate debate, or the reversal of the cold-hearted closure of the Michener Centre, it seems that this government may just be listening for the first time.

Following another Wildrose lead, we see the promise of new schools and new long-term beds. One can hope, for the betterment of all Albertans, that these are real, genuine promises that will result in real, genuine schools and real, genuine beds. These are

big commitments, and I would remind the Premier that we will continue to represent all Albertans, regardless of whom they voted for, as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, holding this government to account.

Now, it is clear that the governing party is no fan of the opposition. The Premier himself seemed to question the need for an opposition at all, calling opposition seats in this House misrepresented, a startling reminder of just how arrogant this government can be, which is odd on so many levels given the fact that without this opposition, where would the governing party be? Certainly not under new management. Albertans deserve good government, and, Mr. Premier, they also deserve good opposition. We've done our job. We're waiting to see if you can do yours.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

Fort McMurray Northern Kickoff Game

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2014 Grey Cup game is just around the corner, and while some of us are taking out the old chili pots, I'm extremely pleased to introduce yet another CFL game that's quickly approaching us. On Saturday, June 13, Fort McMurray will host the 2015 northern kickoff game. As part of the grand opening of Shell place, the Edmonton Eskimos and Saskatchewan Roughriders will take to the field for a head-to-head showdown in what will prove to be an exciting rematch of this previous Sunday's western semi-final game. This pre-season exhibition game will be the most northern CFL game ever played, and it's just the kickoff to a full schedule of community events over a four-day period.

This October we were delighted to see the completed installation of the field turf on the SMS equipment stadium. Once that green turf was down and the white lines were painted, you could really see what a beautiful accomplishment this will be for our city. Shell place is a forward-thinking facility designed for a growing and vibrant community. Facilities like the shared social profit space, a hub for community organizations to operate affordably, has been designed to showcase the creative and collaborative values that the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo has become known for.

The Nexen stage, partner to the SMS stadium, is characterized by a striking curved canopy structure designed to mimic the northern lights and will become the main stage for endless possibilities of sporting events, concerts, festivals, and community events.

Fort McMurray is buzzing, Mr. Speaker, and I invite all of my fellow colleagues to mark June 13 in their calendars and come up to Fort McMurray to experience this energy for themselves. We already anticipate that the northern kickoff game will be sold out, and the beautiful amenities at Shell place should not be left to the imagination. Fort McMurray is not only a great place to do business, but it's also a great place to live, raise a family, and make lasting memories. I don't mind saying it again because it's the truth: community is at the heart of Wood Buffalo.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Edmonton-Manning.

School Wellness Initiatives

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've long been an advocate of wellness as a fundamental plank in the delivery of our health care services. Currently more than half of adult Albertans and

nearly one-third of Canadian youth are overweight or obese. The health risks associated with obesity such as diabetes, heart attacks, cancer, and strokes cost Albertans an estimated \$1.27 billion – that's billion – a year.

Alberta's suicide rate is the second highest in Canada, suicide being the leading cause of death among males 10 to 49. I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that if we can instill a culture of physical, mental, and social wellness in our youth, these statistics will decrease.

I'm pleased to say that in the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont and across the province dedicated people are working towards this goal. The ministries of Health and Education are part of a joint initiative with the University of Alberta in the Alberta healthy school community wellness fund. The wellness fund enables school districts to infuse this into schools by focusing on healthy eating, active living, positive social environments, mental health, and healthy relationships. To date the wellness fund has provided support for 239 projects.

I'm very proud to say that within my constituency Black Gold regional schools has been a leader in promoting health and wellness in our youth. Starting with the healthy hearts initiative in 2004, they were recognized in 2013 with an award of distinction from the healthy school communities award program. Their Healthy Schools Committee, created in 2008, continues to instill this mantra. I'm very pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that this culture of wellness has taken a foothold in schools in my community and many others. It is my hope that this attitude will continue to infect all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Before we continue on, I'm going to recognize quickly the Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask for unanimous consent of this Assembly that we waive rule 7(7) so we can continue with the Routine past 3 p.m.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Let us move on with the next speaker, Edmonton-Manning, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I would like to congratulate the Premier and my colleagues the hon. Minister of Health, the hon. Minister of Education, and the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

School Growth Pressures in Edmonton-Manning

Mr. Sandhu: I rise today to speak on the issues of education spaces in my riding of Edmonton-Manning. Last month's schools announcement did address the need for new school spaces, out of which one school, Pilot Sound, is in my riding, which is one of the fastest growing communities in our province.

We are aware of the shortages of schools within northeast Edmonton as we have a growing community. Working with school trustees and city councillors, we have spent many hours debating how to reduce enrolment pressures. As a group we know it is time for a new way of thinking. We also know we need to involve all community groups, including government, developers, leagues, parents, and residents, to encourage input on a shared-use space for everyone in the community.

The benefits of a joint-use agreement for schools between both the public and Catholic school boards must be considered. These

joint ventures would allow for the sharing of facility space, including libraries, gyms, playgrounds, transportation services, community meeting spaces, and even daycare spaces, Mr. Speaker, yet each school board could still keep their own individual learning spaces separate.

Mr. Speaker, sharing resources means savings in terms of cost and tax dollars, land, and manpower. Sharing resources builds trust, teamwork, and strong communities, which brings a new way to build the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

New Premier

Mrs. Towle: Under the old management we saw a government that was removed from everyday Albertans, often dismissing advice from opposition, front-line workers, and Albertans who did not fall in line with the PCs. It created a government that looked old and tired. The Premier talks a lot about being under new management, saying that things would be different, and we all had high hopes that it would be different, respecting elected officials and working together to move Alberta forward.

Sadly, the new management is looking a lot like the old management. This past weekend the Premier called ridings that were not Progressive Conservative misrepresented. It's the same kind of language Premier Redford used when she called ridings orphaned or when Premier Getty called the opposition un-Albertan.

Perhaps the Premier has forgotten his own time in the House of Commons, when voters elected him to misrepresent the federal riding of Calgary Centre-North as an opposition MP from 2004 to 2006. One of the things that Albertans found so off-putting about the PC government was arrogance. This Premier has chosen not to learn the lessons of the past and to attack Albertans at their core, their right to democracy.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier may want to talk to the almost 725,000 Albertans who did not vote for a PC government in the last election, the same Albertans that exercised their right to vote for change. Insulting them and democracy is not a respectful start to show the PCs are under new management.

The Wildrose believes we need a new generation of leaders that focuses on the future, doing what is right, doing what is fair, and putting Albertans first. We believe that all of our colleagues are public servants, voted to be here by Albertans from across our great province. There is so much we can do in this province by working together, by once again focusing on principled and caring government. In the days when we see people giving up their lives for the right to vote, the right to choose, and the right to democracy, no leader should question those freedoms.

3:00

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report dated November 2014 regarding the committee's review of the draft publication ban (court applications and orders) regulation. This review fulfilled requirements found in section 131.1 of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and was undertaken following a request by the Minister of Human Services.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the committee for their contributions to the review process. I would

also like to thank the staff from Alberta Human Services who shared their expertise with the committee and the LAO staff for their support throughout the review process. Finally, I would like to thank all the stakeholders who contributed their ideas and opinions to the review.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Notices of Motions

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had on November 12 sent you a letter notifying you that I intended to raise a point of privilege under Standing Order 15(2) at the earliest opportunity when the House reconvenes. I will give you notice now that I intend to raise that point of privilege at the appropriate time following Routine, and I will hand over to the pages the notices that can be handed out to everyone else.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Bill 3

Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2014

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce Bill 3, the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2014.

This bill will authorize a trade union to collect, use, and disclose personal information about an individual if related to a matter under a labour relations dispute. This amendment to PIPA addresses the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling that if PIPA restricts collection for legitimate labour relations purposes, it is in breach of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I believe that with this bill this government will be protecting Albertans' personal information while balancing a trade union right of freedom of expression.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move pursuant to Standing Order 75 that Bill 3 be moved to the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 4

Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 4, the Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014.

The proposed changes will strengthen Horse Racing Alberta's governance structure. They are in line with the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. They also support the Premier's commitment to strong public agency board governance and increased accountability and transparency.

The proposed amendments will decrease the total board membership from 12 members to 11 members. This new board structure will also see an increase in public members from three to six, including the board chair. It will consist of five industry-nominated members. It is also important to note, Mr. Speaker, that all appointments to HRA's board will be based on merit and experience as promised by the hon. Premier.

Affirmatively, these modest changes to HRA's governance structure strike the right balance between public accountability and industry representation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

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

Bill 5

Securities Amendment Act, 2014

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 5, Securities Amendment Act, 2014.

As you know, the regular review of amendments to Alberta's Securities Act is required to keep pace with changes in technology, new products, and market innovations and to support the ongoing reform of the system. The amendments being proposed in Bill 5 will ensure the Securities Act is improved where inefficiencies or other impediments to the effective regulation of Alberta's capital markets have been identified.

The amendments are related to a variety of topics, including continued harmonization of general derivatives provisions, incorporation of representatives of registered brokers and advisers, enhanced enforcement provisions, recognition of oversight of the Canadian Public Accountability Board as an auditor oversight organization, fee study provisions, and consequential amendments to related legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans want a security regulatory system that balances the need to protect investors with the need to operate our capital market efficiently to help grow our economy. They also expect provincial security commissions to work co-operatively for the good of investors across Canada. These amendments support both of these objectives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Bill 6

Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (No. 2)

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 6, Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (No. 2).

The bill brings together minor and housekeeping amendments to a number of acts under three different ministries. The amendments are intended to streamline and provide efficiency, clarity, and consistency for the individuals and businesses who are affected by the acts. The acts included are: from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs changes to the Safety Codes Act; from the Ministry of Jobs, Skills Training and Labour changes to the Workers' Compensation Act; and from my ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, housekeeping amendments to combine the Farm

Implement Act with the Farm Implement Dealerships Act and repeal of the omnibus Dairy Industry Act of 2002.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Southwest, I understand you have two tablings.

Mr. Jeneroux: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'd like to table five copies of each of the following reports. In accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act the report by the Auditor General titled Report of the Auditor General of Alberta, October 2014. Copies of this report were distributed to members previously.

In accordance with section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act the report by the Chief Electoral Officer entitled 2013 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer: The Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act for the 2013 Calendar Year. Copies of this report were also previously distributed to members.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. That completes that.
Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today with the appropriate number of copies. The first is the 2015-16 modular classroom plan passed by the Calgary board of education, which clearly shows William Reid way down the list of those schools that need modulars.

I have an open letter from the by-election from the Minister of Education to parents of Elbow Park and William Reid and Earl Grey schools describing the process he went through to come to that decision.

Those are my tablings.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I have Edmonton-Centre, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today on various topics. The first is from a father who was very concerned about the treatment of his severely autistic son during repeated visits to the Stollery centre this summer. It looks like four visits in all.

The second is a letter that was forwarded to the constituency of Edmonton-Centre from the federal constituency office. Delphine Buhr would like her issue brought to attention in that the amount that is granted to diabetics for testing strips, needles, and syringes is only \$600 and it has been that for the last 10 years. She's finding that a great strain.

3:10

Finally, near and dear to my heart, this is directed towards all members of the Assembly. It's produced by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees pay equity committee. It just talks about what we have failed to do around the issue of pay equity in this Assembly and affecting all Albertans.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and table a follow-up to the question that I asked the Minister of

Health when I said it was clearly said about the 85 per cent versus the 95 per cent, and I'm pleased to table the comments that were made by the CEO at the time, Vickie Kaminski.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an article that was in Calgary *Metro* entitled Promises, Promises, five things the Premier would do should he become Premier. I referenced it in the questions; probably appropriate that I table it. The one sentence that I referred to, where the then leadership candidate, now minister of jobs, wondered if it'd be possible, given the province's financial situation, to build the schools, says that the now Premier was acting like a candy man, is here in the *Metro*, and I'd like to table five copies.

The Speaker: Are there others?

If there are no others, then I'll table something as well. Hon. members, it's my pleasure to in fact table five copies of the Property Rights Advocate's annual report, which was distributed to members electronically and was also deposited with the Clerk as an intersessional tabling on June 2, 2014, all in accordance with section 5(3) of the Property Rights Advocate Act. Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Olson, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council annual report, 2013-14.

On behalf of the hon. Mrs. Klimchuk, Minister of Human Services, responses to written questions 42 and 43, asked for by Mr. Wilson on December 2, 2013. Written Question 42: "From May 1, 2009, to May 1, 2013, how many individuals were trained to complete supports intensity scaled interviews, and what specific training is required in order to qualify them to administer the interview?" Written Question 43: "From May 1, 2012, to May 1, 2013, how many clients did the persons with developmental disabilities programs serve, and how many completed the supports intensity scale interview process?"

The Speaker: Thank you.

We have no points of order, but we do have a point of privilege. Let me recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you and to speak to members of the House regarding the point of privilege that I'm raising. Specifically, in referencing the letter that I sent giving notice – I do hope that I managed to send this on to every member that was in fact part of the point of privilege; I certainly tried to do that.

Specifically, on March 11, 12, and 13 members for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Edmonton-Rutherford, and Spruce Grove-St. Albert interfered with the ability of all members of the Assembly to fulfill their duties, specifically the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the third party in that they specifically questioned on this issue. What is at question here is a trip to Grande Prairie,

Alberta, on October 25, 2012, where no government business was scheduled or took place.

Let me give a brief context, Mr. Speaker, of what happened. The Premier or other Executive Council books a plane for use by members of the government for October 25, 2012. This was a trip to Grande Prairie. There were no media events scheduled. There were no events scheduled at all except for a partisan event. The plane also carried the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, among others. I can refer to the manifest as to who was on the flights, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you have access to this, but I'm happy to table it if you'd like. I will make sure that copies are tabled, and I will supply you with a copy of it.

Now, on March 11, 2014, on page 164 of *Alberta Hansard*, a question was asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and in the response the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford said, "I was one of the cabinet ministers that was present with the Premier in Grande Prairie at that time. We made an announcement, as the hon. members should know, with respect to the expansion of the Grande Prairie hospital." Later he says, "This is one example of the important government business that we do using the aircraft that are funded by the taxpayers of [Alberta]."

Mr. Speaker, on page 203, which takes place on March 12, 2014, in *Alberta Hansard*, we have the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert saying, "As the Deputy Premier has been saying, we do separate out the party business from the government business, and this is a clear case of that, actually." He goes on to say, "The members who were on the plane going up to Grande Prairie were on government business."

I continue on, Mr. Speaker, to page 239 – oh, no, I've missed one, sorry. I know I've missed one. I did. On page 204 of *Alberta Hansard*, also spoken in the Assembly on March 12, 2014, the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert said, "The flight in question was for members who were on government duty." Later he says – and let me quote the whole sentence here – "Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, there were a number of items that were scheduled to happen that day in Grande Prairie."

On page 239 of *Alberta Hansard*, on March 13, 2014, we have the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti making the statement that:

This gives me the opportunity to talk about all the flights I took around Alberta that week. That week I flew to Lethbridge, I flew to Medicine Hat, I flew to Edson, I flew to High Prairie to announce hospital announcements, and the fifth one in that roll of announcements happened to be in Grande Prairie.

And there is one other one that I have misplaced, and I apologize to you for that.

Those were the statements that were made in this House, I think very clearly demonstrating those members saying that they had gone to Grande Prairie on a government plane to do government business.

Now, with the benefit of the report of the Auditor General released in August 2014, the Special Duty Report on the Expenses of the Office of Premier Redford and Alberta's Air Transportation Services Program, we, in fact, do find on page 27 a very helpful chart and additional information, in which it noticed that for the event, the northern Alberta leaders' dinner, taking place on October 25, 2012, in Grande Prairie, in answering the question of whether government business was also conducted at the location, the answer is no. So the Auditor General has said: no; there was no government business conducted at this location. He does make a note that on three of the dates in the table multiple government aircraft flew to the same destination as a partisan event, and he includes that particular example. No question, there was no government business that took place, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

Now, they took this government plane to a partisan event, which was, as I said, a northern Alberta leaders' dinner, with no scheduled or actual government business taking place. The Auditor General did investigate and states that no government business took place. There was no government event. There was no media notice. There was nothing on the Premier's schedule. There was a press release that came out, but it had nothing. It had no media availability that went along with it. There was no indication that there would be someone speaking to it in person or responding, appearing in public, appearing before the media in any way, shape or form.

I will point out that there was a partisan media event that was held in the lobby of the venue in which the fundraising event was taking place. I will look for the description, but it was something along the lines of a typical media event that takes place introducing members of caucus when they are doing a fundraising event in a given location. So the only media event that happened, Mr. Speaker, was a partisan media event.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have three ministers involved at the time, some of them not, so I'm referring to everyone by their constituency name. But I will note the three departments that are involved: Executive Council, Treasury Board, and International and Intergovernmental Relations. The Auditor General on page 17 of his report notes that enforcing the policy that was brought forward in October of 2012 is the responsibility of the department of Treasury Board and Finance and that the ministries of Executive Council and IIR are responsible for approving expenses incurred by the Premier and office staff, but I'm assuming that also extends to other ministers and ministries. Then it goes through the guiding principles, and I'll give you three out of the six. "Travel, meal, hospitality and other expenses must support government business objectives." Another one. "Prior approval to incur expenses is obtained where appropriate," and "claims should be able to withstand scrutiny by the auditor general of Alberta and members of the public; be properly explained and documented, reasonable and appropriate."

Those are three of the six policies that are to be followed and are overseen and okayed by the three departments that I have mentioned. So one way or another these three departments book, co-ordinate, or pay for the use of the government planes.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we go to see why this is a point of privilege in particular, I go to the *House of Commons Debates*. Points of privilege exist in this book anywhere between pages 88 and 139, but it seems to me that the two privileges that are granted to us that have been interfered with are the ability to do one's duty, which is obstruction, and also freedom of speech. In particular, I want to draw the Speaker's attention to page 98, where it talks about how important it is that members are prudent and careful with that privilege of freedom of speech and don't abuse it and about why there are long-standing practices and traditions observed in the House to counter the potential for abuse. Speaker Parent is quoted that he expects "that members would always bear in mind the possible effects of their statements and hence be prudent in their tone and choice of words."

So we have, as mentioned at other times, a test, and the test is three points. One, was there a misleading statement? Two, can it be established that the member knew that it was a misleading statement? Three, did the member intend to mislead the House? I would argue that all three of those tests have been met in this case.

Certainly, it was a misleading statement, and I've given you the statements that were actually made in the House according to *Hansard*. They are very clearly stating that the government plane

was used for government business. I've also given you the references to go and look up in the Auditor General's report in which he says: no; there wasn't. Now, I will note that the Auditor General makes a note on page 1 of his report, in which he says that he had access to schedules, reports, staff, bookings, and a number of other things, which he was able to use to ascertain that in fact there was no government business that took place there, and that does indeed appear on page 1 of his report: "interviewed employees of the Ministry of IIR," records from Treasury Board, records and meetings with staff. He names a number of other places he went to look for expertise.

As for the question of whether the members knew that this was an inaccurate statement, a misleading statement, I would argue that I don't know how they could not have known. All members in this House are busy. I've never heard an MLA say that they weren't busy. I've always heard about how busy they are. Therefore, we live by schedules, Mr. Speaker, all the time. Our schedules are done by our staff, but we know there's a schedule, and we're constantly checking it to see what we do next.

Now, in this particular case, with all of these highly scheduled people and with the backup of the Auditor General having looked at all of these records, schedules, and reports from these three, including, Mr. Speaker, on page 26, where the Auditor General makes notice that, in fact, "office staff told us that the dates for Progressive Conservative Party fundraising dinners held throughout the province are well known in advance," the members certainly knew that they had a partisan fundraising event that day. There was nothing else scheduled, so when those members made those statements in the House, they had to have known they had a partisan event scheduled and they had no other events scheduled.

What's the other reason that you — against the fact that they thought that they were going to do some media and therefore this trip was okay. Well, I know that this particular government has a platoon of aides to help them with media. I think that at one point they had more than George Bush's entire staff working for the Public Affairs Bureau. There is no lack of people to assist them with media, and in fact that is done all the time. You cannot go to a media event without there being many staff there to assist these people. In fact, no one was assigned to help anyone do media that day, so I would argue that the ministers know when they have media, and there was no in-person media availability for government that day, and they knew it. They knew that saying that they were there for government business was a misleading statement.

All right then, final question. Did they intend to mislead the House? Mr. Speaker, I think their own words give that. There are quite a few examples in *Hansard* on the dates and pages that I gave to people in which there are other examples of how to answer the questions that were asked without giving a misleading statement saying: I was on government business. I would say that the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert was the superstar there. He can sidestep like nobody's business. You know, here's one of the answers that he gave, appearing on page 164 on March 11 of *Alberta Hansard*.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, we care a great deal about what the taxpayer is charged for travel around the province. We also care about getting to other areas of the province that cabinet ministers are expected to get to. Yes . . . cabinet ministers use our planes. That's what they're for, for us to get us around to meet with Albertans and greet Albertans.

Lots of talk. That was his answer to the question. Never once did he say: "I went to this place. I went to Grande Prairie on this date for government business." So, clearly, members are able to get around to pivot, to redirect, to misdirect the attention and the understanding of people using other ways to talk about this.

3:30

There are lots of very fine examples. This government is practised at it. If I had to give them a gold star for something, it would be for their ability not to answer questions. They are very, very practised at it. So there are examples here of where they answered the same questions even in the same sequence, Mr. Speaker, from the same people without making misleading statements. I argue to you that if they could do it without saying those statements, they knew when they made those statements that they were misleading the House because they knew there were other ways to say this.

When they said things like, "I was one of cabinet ministers that was present with the Premier in Grande Prairie at that time. We made an announcement, as the hon. member should know," — a little bit of sarcasm in there — "with respect to the expansion of the Grande Prairie hospital," well, they didn't. I believe that these members knew. For three days they answered questions in this House, and they knew that stating that there was government business that was done on October 25, 2012, was an incorrect statement.

I ask you to find that there is a prima facie case of privilege, specifically against the Members for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, Edmonton-Rutherford, and Grande Prairie-Wapiti, on the reasoning that they misled the House and interfered with members' ability to fulfill their duties, specifically the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the third party.

Dr. Swann: Calgary-Varsity apologized.

Ms Blakeman: Calgary-Varsity apologized? Oh, yes. I know what you're saying. Yes, indeed, one of the other members that was involved with a return plane trip, also not on government business, did declare publicly that she should have done better homework as to whether it was for government purposes or not. Given that, Mpr. Speaker, I would ask you to find this case of privilege.

I would sincerely hope that the members are able to apologize to the House. I hope that can be an outcome from this, but I will wait for your decision on this issue. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on Standing Order 15. My colleague from the Liberal opposition has dealt with much of the law on this, but I do have some comments that I would like you to respectfully consider. The matter for debate today is whether or not the House was in fact misled by the members in question. The term "misled," as you know, is a prohibited term in debate, particularly in question period. It is one of the items listed in *Beauchesne's*, one of the items you can't say in normal circumstances. I do agree with the member that this is a serious matter and that this type of decorum, of course, must always be kept in this particular Chamber.

To succeed, though, on this point of order, Mr. Speaker, requires the member opposite to demonstrate indisputably not only that members misled the House but that they also intended to do so, as she has indicated, thus members in question would have had to have made statements in the House which they knew at that time — the key, again, is "at that time" — to have been incorrect.

The details surrounding the particular events in question, of course, Mr. Speaker, have been the topic of much discussion over

recent months, both within these walls and beyond, and it's important to know that over the course of the new discussion, new information has emerged. As stated in the letter to you from my colleague in the Liberal opposition, the new information that became available for the Auditor General's report was released on August 7, 2014, months after the statements in question were made. Of course, there is an active investigation under way into this matter, and I will speak no further about that for obvious reasons.

I will point out that this report, as suggested by the member herself, became available months after statements were made in the Assembly, and at no point in the Auditor General's report is there even a suggestion that any of these three members knew any different than the statements that they made in the House. It stands to reason, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that if there were discrepancies between the information presented by the members on the dates in question and the information revealed by the report, these are differences of perception, and there was not an intent to mislead the House on the dates in question.

I have done a bit of research on this, Mr. Speaker. According to *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, third edition,

there are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; it must have been established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and, in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House.

It is, therefore, this government's respectful position that these three conditions have not been met in this case and, therefore, that the alleged point of privilege should not succeed.

I would further suggest that if there is a disagreement between the members of the House, according to *Beauchesne's* 31(1), as is often stated in this Chamber, "A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege." I would also ask you to consider, Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne's* 494, which states, "It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted." Moving forward a bit, "On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident." I believe, Mr. Speaker, that what we have here would be appropriate for a point of clarification rather than a point of privilege.

Those are my submissions, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I rose on a point of privilege on March 12, 2014, where I submitted that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had misled the House, based on the circumstances that we were aware of at the time. I will not take up the time of the Assembly by returning to the facts of October 12, 2012, since they are in *Hansard* and have been well summarized by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, but I would like to offer a few points.

On March 12, 2014, Mr. Speaker, your ruling referred to two concepts, the role of the Speaker and the necessity for the House to accept two contradictory accounts. *Beauchesne*, second edition, paragraph 494 says:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their

own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

I appreciate the Government House Leader's reference to that same statement. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the reason why he did have that in his statement – and I'm going to refer to a statement that you made in your ruling, sir – is that "as such, we must accept that the members who spoke, spoke, I hope, with honour and with their own conviction and their own belief." Now, of course, at the time you couldn't have known.

You know, the Government House Leader also suggests that there is new information that changes the facts. Well, the AG report should not be what is required for someone to understand the facts of their own life. It just shouldn't. You don't need to find a report later on. Not only that, that report, for the reasons he referenced, may not have mentioned the other members in question in this point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. That report was based on our former Premier alone, not on the other members. That was his mandate.

I will continue. The ruling you made also referenced the Speaker's role as established by *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. "The Speaker ensures that replies adhere to the dictates of order, decorum and parliamentary language. The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions."

There was some discussion at the time about the use of flights by several members of the governing party. The question was: did they fly to Grande Prairie intending to conduct government business, or was the purpose of the trip solely to attend to the business of a partisan nature? For this point of privilege, when they repeatedly made statements in the House to the contrary, did the members know that the purpose of the trip was partisan, and did they purposely make statements to hide the fact?

On March 12, 2014, there were various accounts from members of this House about the nature of that trip, which made a ruling on the question impossible at the time. This is no longer the case because of the Auditor General's special report in August and the response to it. The significance is that what may have seemed to be two legitimate accounts of the same thing when this matter was last before the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, is now clearly and broadly recognized as a flight taken for partisan purposes. So whether these government flights could plausibly be thought to be for government business is no longer in question. The Auditor General issued a report that made it clear that they were not. Further, almost immediately the governing party publicly admitted that they were not and promised to repay the funds. As a result, it is clear that the statements made in this Assembly on March 11, 12, and 13 were misleading.

3:40

Now we must determine the following: did the members know that the statements they were making were misleading when they made them and in doing so intend to mislead the House? The members in question repeatedly claimed over three days that the flights were for government business. There is a very clear motive for doing so. There was a great deal of scrutiny of the government fleet at the time, and admitting misuse of the fleet would have meant significant political damage to both those involved and to their besieged party leader, who was also involved. If any of these members did know there was only party business but insisted

otherwise, the motive would obviously be to mislead the House into thinking that use of the government aircraft was justified.

When making the case for contempt the first time, as the Speaker is aware, we cited numerous facts that demonstrated the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, in particular, had been briefed on the issue and had multiple opportunities to admit his error but continued to make statements that would lead the House to believe that there was government business that day in Grande Prairie. He and the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti were also the main individuals involved with the announcement that day. If it was not clear before they got onto the plane on October 25, it should have become abundantly clear by the evening, when all they had done was a scrum outside the party fundraiser, that they conducted no government business despite taking the government plane.

Other information we provided, however, makes it pretty clear that they did know even before getting on the plane because they had no absences scheduled for question period that day. There were no media notified about a government announcement, and the closest thing to government business was a 4 p.m. press release that went out while they were in the air.

It has become increasingly clear that these two members were indeed aware of the truth and had prepared their defence, and based on paragraph 494 of *Beauchesne's*, I understand, Mr. Speaker, you had to take them at their word. When making your ruling, I would ask the Speaker to consider that this matter has not been dealt with during the original point of privilege I raised on March 12 given that the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti in his response in defence of that very point of privilege said the following, and I quote according to page 214 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, just briefly, as I don't want to drag this out. I'm not a lawyer, and I feel like I'm on trial here. You can say what you want, you can call me a liar, but I was at the news conference with a whole roomful of media people. I can probably name some, but going back two years, they may not remember. I can guarantee you there was a media announcement there that day with the Premier and with the minister, and I can stand up in here as an eyewitness and confirm that. You can call me a liar if you like. I was there.

I get no joy out of highlighting this for you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it pains me. I am fully aware of just how serious an allegation of misleading this House is, and it is due to the grave and serious nature of this allegation that I believe it must be addressed.

Given the revelations of the Auditor General report in August confirming there was no government business that day in Grande Prairie, there is only one conclusion we can reasonably draw. As a result of this, Mr. Speaker, I would support the point of privilege by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I believe there is sufficient evidence to justify the Speaker's rule as such and to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The House leader for the ND, briefly, if you would, please.

Mr. Eggen: Yes, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'm rising as well to support this Standing Order 15 by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. We're discussing the most serious breach of privilege that there can be, in my mind. As we know, the concept of breach of privilege is predicated on the idea that the Members of the Legislative Assembly must be free to carry out their duties and perform their functions as elected representatives. Certainly, the ministers knowingly making untrue statements in the House constitutes a grave attack on the dignity of the Assembly.

Particularly troubling in this case is that there are so many untrue statements that were made in response during Oral Question Period. Question period is one of the most fundamentally important forms of our parliamentary democracy, and it has been compromised here. Opposition members are elected in this House to hold the government to account and to represent concerns of constituents. Oral Question Period is one of the only opportunities we have, as well. If government ministers do not approach question period with the same commitment and respect, the ability of opposition members to carry out their duties is compromised.

First and foremost, the point of privilege must be brought forth at the first available opportunity. I think this was made abundantly clear by the previous opposition speakers. At the time of the independent officer's report's release the New Democrats first raised the issue that the Auditor General's findings indicated a clear case of prima facie breach of privilege based on the statements of the minister in question here, so we're glad to support and to discuss this point of privilege today, the first day back at the Legislature.

To be clear, the Speaker of this House on November 7, 2007 – and this can be found in *Hansard* on page 1860 and 1861 – confirmed the principle that a point of privilege, misleading the House, can be raised about statements made several months prior, when the misleading nature of the comments was not yet confirmed or discovered at the time that they were made. Also, I'd like to note that in a previous ruling on a point of privilege from November 7, 2007, page 1860 in *Hansard*, the Speaker also said: "These purported questions of privilege allow members to allege that someone is deliberately misleading the Assembly, which is something they could not say in the ordinary course of debate under [the] rules of debate." Mr. Speaker, the previous rulings on points of privilege related to deliberately misleading the House, for example. Again on November 7, 2007, Speakers have confirmed that there are tests that need to be met, and I think that the tests clearly have been outlined already.

The case before us has been made so straightforward by the Auditor General's findings and was so well canvassed by the members for Calgary-Shaw and Edmonton-Strathcona on March 12, 2014, that I only need to briefly repeat how the situation meets all of the elements of this test. The Auditor General himself confirmed that by claiming that these people were in Grande Prairie on October 25, 2012, for government business, the members for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Edmonton-Rutherford, and Spruce Grove-St. Albert did in fact make untrue statements. I have to note that the Member for Calgary-Acadia on March 12 incorrectly agreed on the record that these members were being truthful when they made these statements as well. Clearly, the members knew that these were not true when they made them. The supposed government business never did transpire, nor were the members involved in such business in their time in Grande Prairie.

We now have further confirmation from the Auditor General that this supposed government business, in fact, never happened. We do know that we have a case that is not just a mere difference of opinion or a question of interpretation. The Auditor General's report constitutes a clear finding of a fact that there was no government business in Grande Prairie on October 25, 2012. There are clear statements on the record from the members in question that they were conducting government business, and there are direct quotes, in fact, that you can find in *Hansard*. It seems reasonably clear that this, in fact, was a deliberate misrepresentation of the truth.

In other words, is there sufficient grounds on the face of it to conclude that the effect of their statements was that the House was

misled and that there was a consequent impediment to the ability of opposition members to carry out their duties? If the answer is yes – in my mind, it clearly is – then the question of privilege merits further consideration by a committee of the Legislative Assembly. It is for this committee to wade through the evidence and for the Legislative Assembly itself to make a final determination.

We know that there are parallel investigations that are taking place in regard to the use of government airplanes. We know that there is an RCMP investigation in a parallel case of misuse of government airplanes. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this adds some import of weight to the debate and the deliberations that you must undertake today. Number two, of course, the Auditor General, an officer of the Legislature, has made clear determinations on this issue as well.

We certainly believe that there is a clear case of breach of privilege, and I welcome your deliberations here today, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

3:50

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, about 35 or 36 minutes of debate have already occurred on this particular point. However, I would extend the courtesy to any other members, particularly those who may have been named, should they wish to make a comment at this time. If they do, I would welcome that, and if not, we will move forward. Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Mr. Horner: Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very, very briefly because, yes, I had been named in this point of privilege. I take the accusations very, very seriously. It is a very significant event to be accused of such things in this House. In the 14 years that I've been privileged to spend in this Assembly, I have never, nor do I know of any of my colleagues who have, ever intentionally misled this Assembly and did not do so in 2012-2013 or even up till today. This is something that our honour and integrity are based upon, and I would not and I know that my colleagues would not intentionally mislead this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, and we'll let the record show Spruce Grove-St. Albert. Thank you for correcting that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, and I will be brief as well. Like my colleague from Spruce Grove-St. Albert, I would want to take the opportunity once again, as I did when the earlier point of privilege was raised, to confirm for this House and for all of my colleagues that I certainly did not mislead nor did I intend to mislead this House in response to any of the questions that were asked of me with respect to this particular matter.

I think that in the previous point of privilege you graciously allowed the opportunity to explain a number of the circumstances surrounding that trip that were particularly poignant to the question of whether or not the House was misled or there was an intent to mislead the House specifically on my behalf. I have and I will continue to conduct myself with the utmost integrity and respect for the House, Mr. Speaker, and that includes, first and foremost, the commitment to be truthful and forthright in answering questions that are put to me.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I stated last time, I'm not going to go into a lot of detail here. I guess my integrity is called into question. The guys have accused me of lying in the House. I do have a newspaper article I'd like to table that was actually written just on August 14 of this year, 2014. It's from the editor of the *Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune*, the newspaper that was there. She states that they were at the press conference that we did and that we did make announcements, and she totally says in this article that Drysdale was telling the truth. I was there; this editor was there. None of those people were there. So I guess: who do you believe? I'll table this.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. A lot of points have been raised here, and I do recall having heard a similar point of order or point of privilege – I can't recall; I think it was a point of privilege – which Calgary-Shaw correctly identified as having occurred back in the spring. So I'm going to review that. I'm also going to review the tabling which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre provided to all of us – and I just received my copy of that – regarding some flight manifests. I want to go through that as well. Similarly, I'm going to go through all of the references that were just put on the record with respect to issues that the Auditor General raised in his report, and I want to review the context within which they were used to argue today's points. I will also review other documents that were referenced by other speakers, and I'm going to carefully review every word that was put down today into *Hansard*.

That being said, with more than 35, 40 minutes of time on this, there's a lot to still consider. I want to be very diligent because as all of you know, a point of privilege is the most serious charge that one member can make against another here. As such, I will take one day or more to deliberate, consider, and then write the appropriate ruling. So that ends the discussion on that matter for today.

Mr. Clerk, you can proceed to Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If it pleases this Chamber, I'd be pleased to go through all of the motions at once. Would that be acceptable, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

2. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.
3. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Evening Sitings

4. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) commencing the week of November 24, 2014, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings

for consideration of government business for the duration of the 2014 fall sitting unless on motion by the Government House Leader made before 6 p.m., which may be made orally and without notice, the Assembly is adjourned to the following sitting day.

Adjournment of Fall Session

5. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2014 fall sitting of the Assembly shall be extended
- (a) up to and including December 18, 2014, or
 - (b) until the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded, whichever occurs earlier, at which time the Assembly stands adjourned.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. All of those motions are not debatable, and we'll have to vote them one at a time.

So I'm going to call the question on Motion 2 first.

[Government Motion 2 carried]

The Clerk: Government Motion 3.

[Government Motion 3 carried]

The Clerk: Government Motion 4.

[Government Motion 4 carried]

The Clerk: Government Motion 5.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

The Speaker: While I have the floor, let me just make the notation here that normally these should be presented one at a time. However, I did acknowledge the Government House Leader because they were all nondebatable, so we proceeded on that basis. Nonetheless, they will be recorded as having been voted individually.

So let us proceed.

Amendments to Standing Orders

6. Mr. Denis moved:
- A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective March 4, 2014, be amended as follows:
 1. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended
 - (a) in clause (a)
 - (i) by striking out "Culture" and substituting "Culture and Tourism";
 - (ii) by adding "Seniors," after "Education,";
 - (b) in clause (b) by striking out "Tourism, Parks and Recreation,".
 - B. And be it further resolved that this motion takes effect upon passage.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

The Speaker: I should have mentioned that this is a debatable motion, but I didn't sense anyone rushing to speak. Thank you.

Government Motion 7, please.

Committee Membership Changes

7. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
- (1) Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Mr. Casey, chair; Mrs. Jablonski, deputy chair; Mr. Amery; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Ellis; Mr. Horner; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. Mason; and Dr. Sherman.
 - (2) Standing Committee on Legislative Offices: Mr. Jeneroux, chair; Dr. Starke, deputy chair; Mr. Bikman; Ms Blakeman; Dr. Brown; Ms DeLong; Mr. Eggen; Mrs. Leskiw; Mr. Quadri; Mr. Wilson; and Mr. Young.
 - (3) Standing Committee on Private Bills: Mrs. Leskiw, chair; Ms Cusanelli, deputy chair; Mr. Allen; Mr. Bilous; Dr. Brown; Ms DeLong; Ms Fenske; Mrs. Fritz; Mrs. Jablonski; Ms Olesen; Mr. Rowe; Mr. Stier; Mr. Strankman; Dr. Swann; and Mr. Xiao.
 - (4) Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Mr. Luan, chair; Mr. Rogers, deputy chair; Mr. Bilous; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Cao; Mr. Casey; Mr. Ellis; Mr. Kang; Ms Olesen; Ms Pastoor; Mr. Pedersen; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Saskiw; Dr. Starke; and Mr. Wilson.
 - (5) Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Mr. Anderson, chair; Mr. Young, deputy chair; Mr. Allen; Mr. Amery; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Bilous; Mr. Donovan; Mr. Hehr; Mr. Horne; Ms Jansen; Mr. Jeneroux; Mr. Luan; Ms Pastoor; Mr. Sandhu; and Mrs. Sarich.
 - (6) Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Mr. Zwozdesky, chair; Mr. VanderBurg, deputy chair; Mrs. Forsyth; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Griffiths; Ms L. Johnson; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. Mason; Mr. McDonald; Dr. Sherman; and Mrs. Towle.
 - (7) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future: Mr. Amery, chair; Mr. Fox, deputy chair; Mr. Dallas; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Hehr; Mr. Horne; Ms Kennedy-Glans; Mr. Lemke; Mr. Luan; Mr. McDonald; Mr. Quadri; Mr. Rogers; Mr. Rowe; Mrs. Sarich; and Mr. Stier.
 - (8) Standing Committee on Families and Communities: Ms Olesen, chair; Mr. Pedersen, deputy chair; Ms Cusanelli; Mr. Eggen; Ms Fenske; Mr. Fox; Mrs. Fritz; Mrs. Jablonski; Mrs. Leskiw; Mr. McAllister; Mr. Quest; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Sandhu; Dr. Swann; and Mr. Weadick.
 - (9) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship: Mr. Goudreau, chair; Mr. Hale, deputy chair; Mr. Allen; Mr. Anglin; Mr. Bikman; Ms Blakeman; Dr. Brown; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Cao; Mr. Casey; Mr. Fraser; Ms L. Johnson; Mr. Mason; Mr. Xiao; and Mr. Young.

4:00

The Speaker: Thank you. This motion is debatable.

Seeing no speakers, let us move on then. Hon. Government House Leader, you have the opportunity to close debate.

Mr. Denis: I would ask to close debate.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

Constituency Week

8. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that Standing Order 3(6), which provides for one constituency week for every three sitting weeks, not apply to the 2014 fall sitting.

The Speaker: Thank you.

This motion is also debatable. Are there any speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion, which I disagree with. I do not think that we should be carrying on to the point of exhaustion making important laws for the public. I think that we should retain the standing orders. It was something that was passed with great wisdom by this House and I think something that should be retained with respect to the physical and mental health of members and also the staff that have to be here as well.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others?

If not, the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

Mr. Denis: Close debate, Mr. Speaker. We're following a commitment here that was made to allow the Assembly to meet for the same number of days as originally scheduled for the 2014 fall sitting. I would respectfully remind this House that this change is specifically only for the 2014 fall sitting, owing to the unique circumstances of having to delay the start to accommodate for four by-elections. We're committed to having constituency weeks in the spring.

Government members are also impacted by this motion as they also appreciate the ability to meet with constituents. However, we all have to make some sacrifices to ensure the Assembly has the max amount of time available to conduct its business. One final point to consider is that between October 27, the day we originally scheduled to come here, and December 18, MLAs will have the same total weeks in and out of the Assembly as outlined in the sessional calendar that was published on January 15: three weeks in their constituencies, five weeks in the Assembly.

The Speaker: That closes debate.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 1 Respecting Property Rights Act

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in second reading on Bill 1, the Respecting Property Rights Act, on behalf of the Premier.

As the Premier has often stated, Alberta is under new management. Our government is focused on the priorities of Albertans, and we're working hard to reflect Alberta values in the direction that we have set and in the bills that we will pass in this House. In keeping with this, Mr. Speaker, our Premier has given a clear direction on providing Albertans with a government based on respect, accountability, and a common-sense, conservative perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully cannot think of anything that is more common sense than respecting Albertans' property rights, and that

is what Bill 1 achieves. Bill 1 marks the beginning of a new relationship between this government and Alberta's farmers, ranchers, acreage owners, and others who play a fundamental role in the economic future of this province.

Bill 1 includes a preamble to establish the importance of property rights to this government and the repeal of the Land Assembly Project Area Act. In the review of the existing legislation and listening to the concerns of Albertans, it had become clear that this act, otherwise known as Bill 19, does not meet the expectations of Albertans and their individual property rights. By repealing this act, we are responding to Albertans' concerns.

This was an act that was not proclaimed and not ever used but continued to be a cause of concern to those who had a vested interest in property, which, Mr. Speaker, is many people. By immediately repealing this bill, we have demonstrated that we have listened to Albertans and have acted out on our first available opportunity.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, this bill has a preamble which demonstrates this government's philosophy and commitment to property rights. It affirms that private ownership of land is a fundamental element of a parliamentary democracy in Alberta. It looks to the Alberta Bill of Rights, which recognizes and declares the rights of the individual to the enjoyment of their property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law.

Further, Mr. Speaker, it also commits our government to consulting with Albertans on legislation that impacts private property ownership. This preamble sets out the parameters of how this government will treat property owners and what they can expect with our government going forward. Expectations play a significant role for private investors in making investments into land and businesses. My message to the investors and all Albertans is that their property rights are and always will be protected in Alberta under the leadership of this Premier and this government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to comment on the Progressive Conservative record on property rights dating back to the days of Peter Lougheed. Peter Lougheed knew that property rights are the bedrock of this province, so much that the protections of property rights were incorporated into the Alberta Bill of Rights. Peter Lougheed also stood up against the Trudeau government, who tried to take property rights out of provincial jurisdiction and centralize them in the hands of federal judges and the federal government in eastern Canada. It is through Lougheed's example and actions that we are here today, renewing our commitment to protecting and standing up for Albertans' interests, and that includes the interests in their own private property.

Our Premier's commitment to private property rights has been a matter of public record for decades. He has made it clear that he intends to apply the same kind of common-sense, conservative approach and responsibility and balance to this issue that he has already demonstrated on many key files.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 is a clear statement in support of property rights. It begins to address landowners' concerns, and it upholds their rights, but we won't be stopping there. Pursuant to the Property Rights Advocate Act and the 2012 and 2013 Property Rights Advocate reports these will be referred to a committee for review during the fall session. We will also look forward to hearing from the committee, following their review, to see if there are ways that we can further protect Albertans' property rights. It is our commitment to a clear and fair process that respects the Legislative Assembly and respects the input of members of this Assembly in that process.

Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 1 and to stand in support of property rights. I also would ask all hon. members to stand in support of this bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I now move to adjourn debate on Bill 1.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Fenske moved, seconded by Mr. Ellis, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Colonel (Retired) Donald S. Ethell, OC, OMM, AOE, MSC, CD, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to open the debate in consideration of the Speech from the Throne. I wish to begin by thanking His Honour the Honourable Colonel (Retired) Donald S. Ethell, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta, for his speech. It is my privilege to stand in these historic Chambers and not only honour the traditions of the past but look forward to the remarkable opportunities that are ours because we are Albertans.

I want to thank the Premier for honouring me and the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville in asking us to open debate on this very important speech, that ushers in the dawning of a new era and positions Alberta for future economic prosperity. The fact that Alberta is a key player in the global economy is evident in the constituency I serve. World-scale industrial sites, immensely productive agriculture and ag-related operations, innovative research, and our greatest asset, people, proudly choose to call the counties, the hamlets, villages, towns, or the city that is located in the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville their home. We are doing our part in this constituency to propel Alberta along its path to a vibrant future.

Alberta's Industrial Heartland is a partnership of five municipalities that is attracting international initiatives that add value to our energy resources. This is the largest petrochemical production region in all of Canada, and it is a major driver of Alberta's economic viability: 582 square miles, investment that exceeds \$20 billion, with the potential for far more. We can turn natural gas into plastics and textile, and we can turn bitumen into diesel. We employ people, thousands of people. We care about their health, and we care about the health of the environment.

4:10

We take a regional approach to managing our environmental impacts because we know that to be competitive on a world scale, our environmental record must be second to none. Fort Air Partnership, one of our partners, is responsible for monitoring an area 4,500 square kilometres in size, and their work is very well respected by local residents. The Northeast Capital Industrial Association has designed and is piloting a regional approach to managing industrial noise.

We are on the move in this constituency, and we require the economic infrastructure that will get our people safely to and from

their work sites and get our goods to market. Better roads, improved rail crossings, additional pipeline capacity, and another bridge across the North Saskatchewan River are desperately needed in this, Alberta's second largest and growing economic region.

Expanding value-added here would quickly create an additional \$650 million per year in provincial corporate income taxes. However, the window for global investment for new petrochemical and hydrocarbon processing is limited. A natural gas strategy is needed now to maximize and support innovation in the development of new products and opportunities in this sector. So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that our government has made maximizing the value of our natural resources a priority and realizes that a robust transportation plan is essential.

Adding value to our products and getting them to market is just as important to our agricultural community as it is to our petrochemical industries. As we enter a future where within 15 years we will be one of six countries in the entire world that will produce more food than our citizens consume, we know that environmental protection, efficient uses of our resources of land and water, food processing, and transportation networks will ensure that in Alberta agriculture remains the bedrock of our society. It will be here long after other industries are gone, and the Speech from the Throne clearly recognizes this. Our ag producers are resourceful. They seize economic opportunities. They are innovative and bold in their decisions. They have to be to meet the challenge of feeding the world.

Now, you'd expect to find beef, fruits, vegetables, bison, and grain grown in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and you would, but did you know that research at Alberta Innovates: Technology Futures in Vegreville has resulted in diversification of crops such as flax and hemp to meet the demands of the construction industry? The biochar project at AITF will unleash value in agriculture and forest residues which were once considered waste but will now contribute toward a strong bioeconomy that produces carbon-rich soil. Our government recognizes the significant value of a research-based economy and is expanding our agricultural research capacity.

Yes, in big blue sky Alberta anything is possible, but there are and will be and will continue to be challenges ahead. Over 4.1 million people call Alberta home today, and that number is expected to rise to 5 million by 2025. Now, I've heard from thousands of Albertans, some who have chosen Alberta as their home and others like me, who were born here, that there is no better province to live in, there is no better province to do business in or to raise a family. We found a place to call home that is the envy of the world. We are blessed by boundless opportunities to grow, succeed, and thrive, but we can always do better. Listening to the people of Alberta, this government, led by this Premier, has heard that we must do better when it comes to ensuring that Albertans have a health care system that addresses the challenges such as patient access, wait times, rural health care issues, and the availability of mental health supports for children, and we want our local health care providers to have input in health care decision-making. The Speech from the Throne clearly outlines that we will be moving in this direction, the direction that Albertans asked us to move in.

As a former teacher I know first-hand how the pressures of growth and an ever-changing world affect our educational system. Working with education partners, we can deliver innovative learning opportunities which will allow high school students to develop high-demand skills and 21st-century competencies to succeed, and we can do this in classrooms instead of hallways because this government is building schools for our children.

Oh, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you personally how thrilled I am that our government will be developing a long-term strategy to develop growth in Alberta's arts and culture because I believe a province that boasts a dynamic arts community will ensure that it flourishes on the world stage.

Albertans are expecting to be listened to, to be engaged, and to be respected. This government has listened and will begin its work by focusing on five priorities: one, sound conservative fiscal principles; two, ending entitlement and restoring public trust; three, maximizing value of our natural resources and respecting property rights; four, establishing our province as an environmental leader; and fifth and probably most importantly, in my opinion, increasing Albertans' quality of life by becoming leaders in health care, education, and skills training. This Premier has committed this government to action.

Now I leave you with these thoughts, Mr. Speaker. Hard work, foresight, and good fortune created this province we are so proud of. Ingenuity, determination, and good government will ensure that our great grandchildren will be equally proud to call her home. There is an optimistic spirit in Alberta that is unparalleled anywhere else in North America. That optimism abounds in the hearts of the constituents I am honoured to serve.

On behalf of the constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville it is my honour and privilege to move that a humble address be presented to His Honour thanking him for his most gracious speech. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour, with great humility, that I be given the opportunity to second the motion moved by my hon. colleague the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I want to thank the Premier for the opportunity of seconding this motion and for allowing me the chance to address this House for the first time as the representative and servant of the constituency of Calgary West. [some applause] Thank you.

As I stand before you today, it is important that I acknowledge that democracy is the cornerstone of our society and its values, and it is through our democratic tradition that I have the privilege of being here with you all now. I am lifted up and borne aloft on the shoulders of those that came before me from Calgary-West: Elaine McCoy, Karen Kryczka, Ron Leipert, Ken Hughes, and, of course, Peter Lougheed. I can see a distant shore, a shore that is the future of the great province, Mr. Speaker, and it is because of the foundation that was laid for me by generations past, a foundation laid by the determined effort and perseverance of people both in the past and present. And it is to these people that I express today my gratitude and thanks. It is the people of Calgary-West to whom I owe this truly great honour, and I see it as my humble duty to fulfill this mandate to the best of my ability.

The past influences the future, but the future is yet to be, and unlike the past the future can be changed by what we think and do in this moment in this session of the Legislature. There is a golden thread in our past, and that thread runs through each of us, yet while each thread is as individual and as unique as each person assembled here today, Mr. Speaker, these threads, while independent, are woven into the fabric we call community. Our individual threads working together make up a tapestry that we today call Alberta. These individual threads that started our provincial tapestry came from mavericks, men and women who were adventurous, hard working, and spirited. These men and

women are the past generations that broke the soil and tamed this land.

Our ancestors toiled, and they worked this land, creating farms and ranches, building communities. And when they were defeated and broken, they got up, they dusted themselves off, and they started over. This Albertan trait was never more evidently displayed than in the recent floods that affected a great portion of our province, including the community of Calgary-West. That is the Alberta spirit: a pride in our past, our strengths, and our cultural diversity. When times are tough, Albertans roll up their sleeves, and they get to work. We have the strength to view the future not as a problem but as a joyous task, a labour to embrace. It is the same independent, free spirit that shaped our past which will guide our province towards the future and the change that the future brings.

4:20

It is said that Alberta was built by mavericks. These mavericks were unique characters. They were inspired and determined risk takers, forward-looking individuals, creative and eager for change. Their collected efforts propelled Alberta in a new direction. They changed the landscape of what was into what is. Were these mavericks great men and women? Some of them, yes. Most of them, nay, the majority of them were regular people. They were and are people of our communities, our neighbours, and our constituents. Alberta was built by these hard-working people.

I often wondered what brought these people to Alberta. I think that it was not only the Canadian government's program to settle the west, but it was the unique and diverse land itself: the boreal forests to the north; the Rockies, that framed the west lands; the aspen forests and farmlands of central Alberta; and the grass rangelands of the south. Whatever the reasons, they came and then made Alberta home, and they set down roots and families. Mr. Speaker, they were our founding families. They make up the colourful portrait that is our past. They are the foundations of Alberta heritage.

I say "foundation" because today's Albertans continue to build the history of this great province. Alberta is very much a work-in-progress. Alberta started a new chapter, one that is fundamentally built on solid principles of integrity, responsibility, and accountability. Although these values were borne in the past by our forefathers and in strengthening government by Calgary-West past representative the hon. Premier Peter Lougheed, I believe this new era will be one that will allow our province to be blessed with continued growth and prosperity.

Our early tapestry was one of cultural diversity. Our present is made up of the same wonderfully diverse thoughts and ideals, races, and creeds. I'm here to represent every Albertan, not just those who voted for and supported me. I will to the best of my ability ensure that all of your voices are heard. To those that did not vote for me, please allow me the chance to earn your trust. Once again I must stress that Albertans have entrusted all members of this House with a tremendous amount of responsibility, which we should hold in the highest esteem. The government of Alberta, your government, will be ushering in a confident and constructive era that will focus on supporting and strengthening communities and families. I am sure that this sentiment is shared by all hon. members of this House.

I was once asked what a true Albertan was, and that was something that made me think: was I one? I live in Alberta. I was born and raised in Alberta. I married, and my wife and I are raising our children in Alberta. I make my living in Alberta, and I reside in Alberta. But does all of this make me an Albertan? I believe it does. But I also know that I came from stock that

immigrated to Alberta, like the majority of Albertans, some time in the past. It is that cultural diversity that makes Alberta strong. It is that very cultural diversity that makes up Calgary-West.

Our duty as elected officials is not to be taken lightly. We are all here to serve all the people of Alberta. This is the duty that is particularly near and dear to my heart. My history as a police officer serving in the Calgary Police Service allowed me to serve Albertans and support the community. I see this role no differently. In both positions I have been chosen to serve Albertans and have their best interests at heart. I would like to thank and recognize all my brothers and sisters in law enforcement throughout Alberta as they put their lives on the line every day they put on their uniforms.

I come from a long history of dedicated public servants on my father's side, with over four generations dedicated to service in the military and law enforcement. It began when my great-grandfather Corporal Albert Ellis fought in World War I and survived the slaughter of Vimy Ridge 100 years ago. The Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge is considered by many as a defining moment for Canada. This was the moment in time Canada became a nation. It continued with my grandfather Corporal Frank Ellis, who was a World War II veteran, and through to my father, George Ellis, who was a police officer and a major in the Canadian military. The Ellis family has given to this community, this province, and this country for four generations, and we will continue to give.

My mother Doreen Chobzay's side has deep roots in the coal mining communities of Canmore and East Coulee, Alberta. [some applause] Thank you. My great-grandfather Michael Chobzay was a hard-working coal miner, and my great-grandmother Mary Chobzay along with her two daughters, Doreen and my grandmother Jean, spent their time feeding the miners. What exemplified my coal mining family the most and exemplified the rooted values of truly being an Albertan was during World War II, when my great-grandmother not only fed the miners but also fed the young boys heading off to war. My family was not rich, but what little extra they had they gave to those less fortunate.

These young Alberta boys who were going off to war, Mr. Speaker, were impoverished, never knowing when or where their next meal would come. They did not resort to crime but instead embraced the values of being an Albertan. When the country of Canada called upon them to serve, these Alberta boys without hesitation were the first to sign up and defend our freedom and our right to sit in this very Assembly today. Although we may never know their names, we must remember them for what they did for each and every one of us.

I can safely say that I am rooted here. I can safely answer that previous question: I am an Albertan. My family has proudly served and taken part in working hard to build this province. My family was among the mavericks, and they worked hard to create Alberta as we know it today. I will work hard for every Albertan to ensure that Alberta remains the resilient home that we know it to be. As a Calgarian and, most importantly, as a devoted Albertan I have taken a vested interest in serving my community by doing what is right. I believe that is truly what being an Albertan is, and I know that I am not the only one who shares this view. An appreciation for family, community, a consideration for generations to come make a person appreciate the duty, the bound necessity of making one's home and community better for future generations.

This realization played a crucial role in my choice to pursue a career with the Calgary Police Service. The value system within the Calgary Police Service very much resonates with me. I have dedicated my life to serving others. I feel that this is extremely important, and I have tremendous respect for public servants.

While in the police service I became a victims' advocate. I believe in protecting victims and their rights by ensuring that there's accountability while considering the overall situation and the individual's rights.

I was the only law enforcement officer who was ever a part of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness. Sadly, today homelessness is not just reserved for individuals; it now represents families, and we still have work to do, Mr. Speaker. When you push people to the edge of society by not allowing them a place within it, you marginalize them. They are put into a powerless position just outside society. Is this the choice that Albertans are comfortable with?

My choices speak for themselves. I am a working man. I always have been, and I always will be. I am here to serve my community in whatever way I am able. Under the leadership of our Premier I feel that I am able to continue to serve others under his plan for Alberta.

The constituency of Calgary-West is rich with history, and I recognize this and honour those that have come before me. The electoral riding of Calgary-West is one of the two original Calgary ridings of the seven that have survived from the 1959 redistribution of the Calgary ridings. The other riding is Calgary-Glenmore. Calgary-West's population increased by 151.3 per cent between 1994 and 2012 compared to a 44.3 per cent increase for Alberta. The riding is made up of 14 communities, which hold 32,198 homes and a population of at least 80,870 people, and it is still growing. This tremendous growth, Mr. Speaker, has brought infrastructure issues to light. A prime concern of the riding's constituents is ready access to schools and health care and the development of the Calgary ring road.

I look forward to continue serving this community, that has had a remarkable impact on me. Community is the cornerstone in both my life and my value system, and I am happy to have my family be a part of the community of Calgary-West. I thank my beautiful wife, Hollie, and my three children – Simone, aged 10; Keaton, aged six; and Mason, aged two – for reminding me every day how important it is to work for Albertans to ensure that they are protected and are able to grow and build an even more resilient Alberta. Family and a sense of community values teach you the importance of building a better future in a way that nothing else really can, yet building for the future does not come without hard work and determination. My family's military and coal mining roots have made this very clear to me.

They have also made clear to me that in a province like Alberta anyone with determination can make a brighter future for himself and those around him. It is important that every Albertan deserves an equal opportunity to pursue the best possible future for oneself. At the end of the day is that not why we are all here today, to ensure that Albertans are given an opportunity and the best possible environment to succeed? Is this not what the past generations have committed to providing us? We have all made an important commitment to our constituents. Our communities, our friends, and our neighbours have passed us a torch, a torch of hope and a torch of trust. This torch represents their dreams and their tomorrows. We have collectively as an Assembly been entrusted with a sacred commitment to building a brighter future, not just for a select few but for all Albertans.

4:30

I promise to bring ethics, honesty, integrity, accountability, and respect to everything I do in my capacity as a servant not only for my constituents' interests but for all Albertans' and colleagues'. These values are integral to who I am and what I stand for in all aspects of my life, and in my view they are values shared by all

Albertans as well. It is with these values in mind that I decided to take my part in the province's moment of renewal under the new management of our new Premier. The Premier has laid out a sensible plan that has resonated with me and has clearly resonated with Albertans: a focused commitment to conservative fiscal principles, an end to entitlements and a restoration of public trust, maximizing the value of our resources while respecting property rights, establishing Alberta as a leader in environmental practices, and, of course, continuing the effort to establish ourselves as a leader in education, health, and skills training.

The new – and I repeat: new – management team of this province, with their reasonable, common-sense approach to decision-making, is well poised to chart a course into the future by continuing to serve Albertans and strengthen communities across this province. Mr. Speaker, it is time for our golden threads to be added to the tapestry that is Alberta.

Thank you, sir, and God bless.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, just before I recognize the Leader of the Official Opposition, I would like to bring to your attention that we have seven new pages joining us today. Raise your hand, new pages, those of you who are new. Some are in, and some are out, but there they are. Please thank them.

Number two, I'm going to recognize the Leader of the Official Opposition in a moment, and pursuant to Standing Order 29(1)(a)(ii) she will have up to 90 minutes to speak. Following her speech there will be a five-minute question-and-comment period offered under 29(2)(a), and since no lists have been given to me yet about who wishes to speak thereafter, I would encourage you to send me that list so that we can then proceed in the alternating fashion. However, it is common tradition to recognize one speaker from the Liberal Party first and then one speaker from the NDs and then to do the alternating. If you want to get onto the list after those next three speakers, please send me a note, and we'll develop it accordingly.

Let me recognize the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne. I should put everyone at ease because I did hear a few groans when you reminded people I have 90 minutes. I will not use the full 90 minutes. [some applause] Yes, I figured I'd get at least some consensus and a round of applause on that.

It is always a pleasure for me to hear His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor deliver the Speech from the Throne. It always is so hopeful, and it should be no surprise that in the throne speech we, and I in particular, once again found many things to support and be hopeful for.

One of the things I liked in particular was the recognition that we need to build better relations with our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. I was very, very pleased to see in multiple levels throughout the entire throne speech that that's going to be a priority for this government. As you know, Mr. Speaker, these issues, that are near and dear to my heart, are the reason why I am the Aboriginal Relations critic for my party. I believe it's foundational for our province to make sure that as we go forward, we go forward in partnership with our friends in our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to make sure that they are able to share in the incredible prosperity that we know this province has and will continue to enjoy. So to see that we are going to see partnerships in social areas, education, labour force, environment, energy as well as in health care I think is vitally important for us.

I have in the past asked for some accountability around the number of dollars that flow through to us from our federal government for urban aboriginal housing as well as urban aboriginal health initiatives, and I've been unsuccessful in being able to get answers to those questions. With the renewed focus in this throne speech on making sure that we do everything that we can to ensure the integration of urban aboriginals, I'm hopeful that I'll have a better answer to that question when I ask it again in the future.

The other area that, again, it's hard to find fault with, because it sounds very similar to my own leadership campaign bid back five and a half years ago, when I was running for leader of the Wildrose Party, is to see the five core principles that have been identified as areas that this government intends to work on. Of course, listed on page 2 of the throne speech: a focused commitment to sound, conservative fiscal principles. Who can disagree with that? Ending entitlements and restoring the public trust: again, who could possibly disagree? Maximizing the value of our natural resources and respecting property rights: protecting private property rights is one of the reasons why I decided to run for provincial public office. Establishing our province as an environmental leader and increasing Albertans' quality of life by being a leader in the areas of health, education, seniors' care, and skills training: in all of that my colleagues in their critic roles, I think, have distinguished themselves in advocating for some changes in that regard. Also, accountability and transparency, one of the core principles that I think every one of the opposition parties has been asking for over the last number of years that I've been in the Legislature.

Other things that I was pleased to see and that, I'm sure, my colleague for Little Bow was pleased to see since he's been such a champion: getting a program in place for proper bridge maintenance and repair. I'm very pleased to see that that was referenced in the throne speech. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that there will be lots of questions asked on that as a progress report as we go forward over the coming months leading up to the next election.

In addition, I'm sure that my colleague the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat was pleased to see that there are now going to be biannual reports. Two times a year they're going to have report cards on the progress of infrastructure projects. My colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat has been tireless in putting forward a number of studies and suggestions about how to better manage infrastructure. He's now moving on to the environment portfolio, but I think he can be gratified that the government has appeared to listen to him in that regard as well.

In addition, my colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills has been a champion, as have other members of the opposition, on making sure that legal aid is expanded for those on AISH in particular, so I was pleased to see that that is a commitment that was made in this throne speech.

I would like to give the government the benefit of the doubt that they are actually going to implement the agenda that was outlined in this throne speech. Sadly, we don't have much in the way of a record that would demonstrate that we should have that level of confidence. I go back to the 2012 Speech from the Throne: 10 key priorities, two of them now apparently completely repudiated. We heard, of course, the Health minister today say that the issue of family care clinics is completely off the table, and if you go back and look at that 2012 speech, there are very few areas where the government made meaningful progress, and in some cases they're walking away from it altogether.

In 2014, once again, there was actually a laundry list of things that the government intended to accomplish – five key areas, 34 different priorities – and virtually none of them has had any meaningful progress on them. Unfortunately, looking at past practice, the problem is not the ideas and the vision that are laid out. The problem is that the government has a very difficult time actually meeting any of its commitments.

We also look at the list of priorities in this new throne speech. It's demonstrating a lot of recycled promises from the past. The question is whether or not they are going to actually deliver.

It's with great sadness that I noted a few minutes ago that the Senate has failed to pass a provision that would have seen the Keystone pipeline get approved. [some applause] I know that my friends in the New Democrat opposition may be pleased to see that, but the rest of us are very unhappy to see that.

I would point out, of course, that this is something the Premier said today as a justification for why he had to appoint his friend to the position rather than have an open competition, that he thought that he had the best chance of being able to get this project approved in the Senate. Well, it failed. I'm very hopeful and will be very supportive of the Premier and this government in their aspirations to extend market access, whether it's Energy East or Gateway or Trans Mountain or some other proposal, but I have to say that this is certainly a setback right at the beginning of the Premier's term.

The laundry list of problems that are identified in the throne speech that need a solution: I guess it's pretty clear to me that we have to be mindful of the fact that the reason there are those problems is because of the members opposite and the successive years and decades of government that have brought us to a point where we have so many problems that require so many solutions. It's also part of the reason why we're skeptical at some of the approaches that they appear to be taking. There are a number of areas where they appear to be going right back into the same area of difficulty that we saw with the previous Premier. This is a government that did not get a mandate to borrow for capital purposes. They have been desperately trying over the last two and a half years to try to convince Albertans that they voted for something other than what they voted for.

4:40

I think we all remember pretty clearly that the mandate of this government was to be able to manage our finances without going into debt, yet here we have in the throne speech once again an affirmation that there's going to be borrowing for capital purposes only. The problem with that is that it seems to imply that this government has had a history of running operational deficits. There was only one year that this government in recent political history ran an operational deficit, and that was in 2008, when we had a global financial crisis. We've virtually always had an operational surplus. It's certainly not a bar to strive for to say that you're going to do something that you've always done.

The problem that we have is that we now have a government that doesn't seemingly have any intention of ever getting out of debt financing, and I don't think that this is something that Albertans want to see. They've admitted in the throne speech in multiple places that we're a province of 4 million people, growing to 6 million people by 2040. We may be at 8 million people by the end of my lifetime. So if we're going to see a 50 per cent increase in the number of people in this province – if you look at Stats Canada, they talk about how it's going to increasingly be a younger generation of individuals coming here, who will bring with them, of course, their young families, who require schools as well as medical attention – we're going to need 50 per cent more

of everything. We're going to need 50 per cent more schools, 50 per cent more hospitals, 50 per cent more long-term care beds, 50 per cent more transportation infrastructure.

So at what point does this government think we're going to be able to just wipe our hands and say, "Hey, we're done building; now we can start paying that debt back"? The fact of the matter is that we are going to constantly have to invest every single year in infrastructure. They have an unsustainable plan because their plan relies on them borrowing to be able to build this capital as opposed to budgeting for it properly every single year without going into debt.

My colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat put forward a five-year, \$50 billion, debt-free capital plan. We are going to continue to press the government to find a way to make sure that we can build our priority infrastructure without going into debt because we've seen what happens in other jurisdictions when they decide that it's okay to borrow for capital purposes. The amount of borrowing continues to go up, the amount of finance charges continues to go up, and you never ever see them making any strides toward paying the money back.

There is lip service paid in the throne speech, of course, to only borrowing with a clear debt repayment plan. Well, of course, the former Finance minister argued that that's what he had in place. If you look at the amount of money he was setting aside, it was nowhere near enough to be able to get us to a point where we would have the balloon payment available when those bonds came due. In fact, I think it would have taken 80 years to pay off the current level of borrowing with the amount of repayment plan that the previous Finance minister had set aside. I'll be looking to see whether or not that changes in the next budget, but I have to say that I'm not hopeful.

The other areas where it seems like the government is saying one thing but, I suspect, are going to do another: they talk about moving away from a five-year plan to a 25-year plan. I have to say, based on their history, that this may sound visionary when they say it and put it on paper, but when you look at their history and their record, it sounds absurd that a government that has been completely incapable of building the schools that were promised two and a half years ago would somehow be able to foresee into the future what the 25-year capital plan would be. I'll be interested in seeing what is on that list. But I have to tell you that I'm very skeptical, if they haven't been able to meet the demands that we have currently, that we can actually look at a 25-year plan with anything other than raised eyebrows and skepticism.

They talk about keeping taxes low and say that they're going to have no sales tax, but I think that underlying that message and certainly from the answers the Premier gave me today, it appears that other taxes will certainly be on the table. The fact that he was unable to give an unequivocal answer to the question of whether or not he would raise any existing taxes or bring in new ones suggests to me very strongly that Albertans are looking in the upcoming budgets at a government that is going to throw away the Alberta advantage and start looking at ways of increasing taxes rather than taking the advice, that we've been giving them for years, of getting their spending under control.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

They talk about having a straightforward budget presentation, but here we have it once again. They're not going back to the Klein-Dinning gold standard of how budgets should be presented: total dollars in, total dollars out, and what do you have left over, a surplus or a deficit? In fact, to say in a statement that you're going to have balanced budgets and clear fiscal budget presentation but

you're still going to go into debt shows me that it's completely incongruous. We're going to continue to see the amount of debt go up.

They talk about ending excessive severances for political staff. Of course, when this promise was first delivered, it talked about ending excessive severance packages for all staff. Now, the fact that they've narrowed it down to just a handful of top political staffers suggests to me that there isn't a level of seriousness about addressing this issue. It was only two weeks ago that we heard that Allaudin Merali has walked away with a \$900,000 severance payment, which is an absolute slap in the face to our front-line workers. How many LPNs could that have hired rather than continuing hand over fist to give money to these individuals who have excessive severance packages along with their excessive compensation packages.

They talk about ending sole-source contracts – but here's the fine print – in all but exceptional circumstances. Let's call this the Navigator clause because we certainly know the argument in the Legislature about why Navigator was hired on a sole-source communications contract was that it was because of exceptional circumstances. I have to wonder which contracts are going to be able to get a fast track because of that couched language.

They also have a very interesting line in the throne speech that I'll be keeping an eye on. They want to make a further distinction between registered lobbyists and government consultants. I'll tell you what I'm reading in between the lines there. What I'm reading in between the lines there is that there are certain people who are going to be recategorized from being lobbyists, who have to register and so be transparent about the work that they're doing, to being government consultants, who don't have to register and therefore don't have to be accountable and transparent about the work that they do. I think we need to keep an eye on how that is going to end up turning out.

There's a statement about greenhouse gases, "advancing efforts to monitor, measure, and report on our progress," but what I find very interesting once again is that it doesn't actually talk about achieving any targets. This is fundamentally the problem with the government's plan and its approach to market access. We will not get market access for our product until we start making meaningful and achievable actual reductions in greenhouse gases and other measures to improve our air, land, and water. Unfortunately, effort is not the same as achievement. It's a lesson that this government still has not learned.

The biggest disappointment is that there is no realistic plan to deal with health care. There are lots of platitudes. There is lots of language around giving more respect to health advisory councils, talking about continuing care beds and how that's going to somehow magically solve the emergency room crisis. But you do very much get the sense that this government believes that under their new management they're just going to be better central planners than what was happening under the previous Health minister. There's no real change in direction, no real change in approach.

They certainly have not learned the lessons that Dr. Paul Parks has indicated, that the only real way that we're going to free up capacity in our emergency rooms and be able to start making a dent in reducing the amount of surgeries and procedures is by building long-term care nursing beds as well as having transition beds so that you can stabilize patients and move them into an area where they can get 24-hour care.

It is very clear when you talk to emergency room doctors that if somebody is going to be released from hospital and they're not going to be able to get that 24-hour care, they won't release them. As a result, you end up having somewhere between 400 to 700

people who are in inappropriate care, costing \$1,650 a day, when they would be more comfortable in a proper long-term care nursing facility, getting the 24-hour care they need at \$150 a day. I see no evidence that the government recognizes that that is at the heart of their solution, and they demonstrated once again in the throne speech that they don't know the difference between continuing care beds, long-term care nursing beds, and the impact of building the wrong type of bed as opposed to the kind that we actually need.

On the issue of school construction my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View went through it in some detail today, as did I. They've only built 18 schools since 2011. They're projecting that they're somehow going to manage to get things together to build 49 schools in the next 23 months when none of them are even started. Most of them are just barely in the design phase. I have to say that this is another example where the aspirations laid out in the throne speech are very unlikely to be delivered on.

Then, of course, the disaster recovery program. I'm very hopeful that there is going to be a resolution of the appeals by the end of the year, but this is, again, one more area where I fear a political announcement was made to aid a by-election as opposed to a realistic announcement because of the assessment of the situation. There are thousands of individuals, not only in my riding but also in the riding of the hon. Education minister, the representative for Calgary-Elbow, who have not even begun the appeal process, who have felt revictimized by the mismanagement of the disaster recovery program.

4:50

The fact that there are still so few individuals internal to the department working on these files leaves me very unsettled, not only because I fear that these individuals are going to have to wait years before they get resolution, as has happened in previous flood incidents in Medicine Hat. But what happens in the event of another flood or another fire or some other major disaster? The government has made absolutely no progress on being able to create a disaster recovery program that works. It's certainly not working for the people who have had the misery of having to deal with it for the last 18 months. We are going to continue to press the government to make sure that they make some real progress on that.

As for the flood mitigation issue, it was already discussed earlier today, the fact that projects were announced without consultation and buy-in from the city of Calgary. I think that's just one more example of seeing a government that does business under the new management the same way they did under the old management, making decisions without making sure that you've got the individuals at the table who are most impacted, brought onboard, and have the buy-in.

The biggest disappointment, though, is Bill 1, Respecting Property Rights Act. Madam Speaker, it is instructive and symbolic that this entire throne speech is anchored by a bill, Bill 1, that has a mere seven words to describe what the government is going to do. It shows how much the government is long on spin but short on understanding. Let me quote the press release attached to the throne speech. It says this: "Bill 1, focused on respecting property rights, was introduced by [the Premier] and will be the foundation of a new relationship between government and property owners."

Now, the Premier likes to trumpet his expertise on property rights, and his statements on property rights have hinted at an actual understanding of these issues. But what happens when he gets a chance to put his actual words into action? We get a one-sentence bill that repeals only one piece of legislation that we

know has been causing problems for our landowners for the last number of years, a piece of legislation, incidentally, Madam Speaker, that was so bad that even this PC government, with its long track record of stomping all over property rights, lacked the resolve to actually proclaim. Now it's being repealed. The government's actions did not live up to the talk. Really, no property rights expert, certainly no lawyer who claims to understand property rights and property rights legislation, can believe that the unproclaimed former Bill 19 is all that's wrong with property rights in Alberta.

[The Speaker in the chair]

But, really, the weakness and tone deafness of Bill 1 is symbolic of what's wrong with this entire throne speech, Mr. Speaker. Throne speeches are supposed to set an agenda for government. They are supposed to be a way for the Premier and the cabinet to signal to Albertans and the civil service what is important, what to expect, what will come. Albertans who are looking to have a forward-looking agenda that would prepare Alberta for the future and deal with the big issues we are facing will undoubtedly be deeply disappointed in this throne speech. The Premier likes to claim that the province is under new management, but the throne speech makes it clear that the new management has no strategic or operational plans. If this were a business, the market would be expressing deep concerns about how the new management has such a poor grasp of the fundamentals.

Now, let me tell you what I think should have been in the throne speech. What we saw in this throne speech offered very little departure in policy from the previous Premier. We didn't get a new strategic plan for the future of Alberta. All we really received was recycled campaign promises but no real details on how those promises will be kept or, most importantly, how they will be paid for with the price of oil now heading towards, at the very least, \$70 a barrel.

The PC government is continuing on its policy to borrow billions of dollars to pay for basic infrastructure. There is no plan for how to pay for these promises with targeted spending or actual improvements in performance of core government services. That leaves only new taxes and new fees, and I am sure that Albertans will have already noted that the PC Party and the Premier are already hedging on those two issues. This matters because the Premier made a lot of expensive promises during the campaign, but Albertans not only want promises. They want a plan for how to achieve them, and they want to understand how these will be paid for.

The Wildrose has very clear differences with the governing party. The Wildrose believes that the budget should be balanced, really balanced, every year and that the books should be an honest reflection of the money coming in and the money going out and the amount being spent on debt. The governing party will have racked up \$20 billion worth of debt by 2016. At this rate they will have \$40 billion worth of debt by 2020, or \$60 billion worth of debt by 2024, costing us billions upon billions of dollars in annual interest charges.

We believe low taxes, streamlined regulation, and a level playing field is the best way to support families, attract new investment, and diversify the economy. PCs continue to pick winners and losers.

We believe our energy business needs a stable, predictable environment to operate under. The governing party hasn't provided stability. We've seen arbitrary changes to royalty rates. We've seen cancelled leases up in the oil sands and elsewhere,

and we've seen increasing red tape that's undermined investor confidence.

We believe we need stable, low-cost electricity to fuel our continued growth and protect consumers. The governing party continues to build transmission lines that we don't need. They make consumers pay the full cost for the amount of cost overruns, and they seemingly have no ability to moderate excessive and extreme price spikes.

We believe we need to improve our reputation on the environment, and to do that, we need to make real and measurable progress on improving the quality of our air, water, and land and reducing greenhouse gases. I've already mentioned that the government has no plan to actually achieve any of its targets, but there certainly is a lot of PR around what they intend to tell the international community that they're doing without making progress.

We believe we need a new relationship with our municipalities that treats our municipal partners as another order of government and flows through a stable, growing number of dollars in a permanent transfer program with no strings attached. The governing party has created a begging model for our municipalities, where our cities and towns have to guess where they are on the priority list of projects and then also hire special staff to fill in application forms and lobby for grants.

We believe our heritage savings trust fund should grow from about \$15 billion to about \$150 billion and that future generations should be able to share in our resource wealth. If this government had even begun to manage our resource wealth properly, just reinvesting the dollars from the heritage savings trust fund back into the account, it would already be worth \$150 billion today. Instead, it not only racked up new debt, but they blew through almost \$17 billion worth of savings that were in the sustainability fund, and they continue to spend every last dollar of resource revenue every single year and are not setting enough money aside to pay the debt back when it comes due.

We believe health care should be decentralized to the local level, with day-to-day decisions for staffing and surgeries and procedures made by hospital administrators with their own budgets overseen by local hospital boards. The governing party: they've centralized our \$18 billion health system into the office of the Health minister, they have centralized EMS services, they have centralized home care, they have centralized lab services, and they have no real plan, as I have mentioned, to be able to clear up the problem that we have in our emergency rooms or build enough 24-hour long-term care nursing beds.

We believe that parents have a fundamental right to choose the kind of education they want for their kids. The governing party continues to introduce fads in the education curriculum that are impacting our students' international performance, continues to believe in fuzzy math, fuzzy report cards. In the meantime school boards are forced to charge fees to make up shortfalls. They promise schools, then they don't build them, and then they make political decisions on which projects do ultimately get approved.

We believe in free votes in the Legislature so that every single citizen can know that they will be represented on the issues that matter to them. The governing party simply doesn't.

We believe we need a return to ethical behaviour in government: no first-class flights, no five-star hotels, no lavish salaries and six-figure severance packages, no sole-source contracts, no special deals for cronies, no dumping failed politicians and political staffers into top jobs in the civil service, no buying elections with shady, last-minute spending announcements. In short, we need clean government.

Albertans are looking for a new generation of leadership with innovative ideas about how to move Alberta forward, and in looking at this throne speech, they would be disappointed. With resource revenues in steady decline, the Premier needs to do a better job explaining how his major promises can be kept while improving the outcomes for government services. Sooner or later the Premier is going to have to come to terms with reality and realize that governing is more than recycling old campaign promises or trying to distance himself from the mistakes of the last three Premiers. Albertans deserve a government ready to meet the challenges of our province head-on and to be honest enough with them about how they're going to achieve it. They didn't get that sort of government out of this throne speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available should anyone wish to take advantage of that.

I see none, so let us move on to the leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition.

5:00

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Alberta Liberals it's my pleasure to reply to this year's second Speech from the Throne. First and foremost, we must all give thanks to the Treaty 6 peoples and the First Nations of our country for giving us the opportunity to live in the best place in the world. We must give thanks to those who build and maintain our roads and bridges and buildings, and those who care for and teach our children, and those who care for our sick and elderly, and the civil servants who help run our government and our public services. We must also remember that the safety we all enjoy is because of the men and women of our armed forces – past, present, and future – as well as our front-line responders, who lay their lives on the line to protect and serve us 24 hours a day.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Liberals want to build a strong economy and a strong society. Liberals believe in fiscal, social, and environmental responsibility. Liberals believe in equality of opportunity, personal freedoms, and consideration for future generations. Liberals believe the decisions that we make today should be made through the lens of what is best for our children. Liberals believe in building a strong middle class because we believe that when more of us do better, more of us do better; we will actually have a stronger society. Liberals believe that after 43 years it really is time for new management with a new government.

Today there are a lot of good things happening in Alberta. We have a good economy and an abundance of natural resources, with more than 4 million people, hard-working, industrial people, who were either born and raised here or arrived here in search of prosperity and opportunity and to build a better life. But there are a lot of things that are substandard and must be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve the truth from elected officials, however inconvenient it may be. Once we are honest with ourselves and acknowledge that we have problems, we can get down to the business of fixing them. We have a province with a lack of sustainable, predictable, adequate funding for vital public services, funding that our municipalities desperately require.

This has resulted in delayed and crumbling infrastructure, a severely underresourced K to 12 education system, with classrooms bursting at the seams. Drastic cuts to postsecondary education and programs have led to amongst the highest tuition and fees in our country and the lowest postsecondary participation rates. Our seniors and disabled are neglected and too often

languish in hospital hallways, which directly leads to the acute-care health care crisis, despite having a big-spending health care system.

Mr. Speaker, today we have more than 90,000 children living in poverty, and poor kids come from poor families. We have a lack of protection for our LGBTQ youth. Our remand centres and prisons are full of folks with mental health, addiction, or poverty issues. Inadequate family and community supports have led to a record number of children in government care dying. One child has died in care every week for 14 years in the wealthiest place in the world, all at a time when regular hard-working Albertans struggle to get by and make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, we must improve the lives of our First Nations, our Métis, and Inuit. We must make this a priority, and I'm glad to see that in the Speech from the Throne.

However, Mr. Speaker, we've got to ask ourselves a question. Are we better off today than we were 10 years ago? Many would say no. To top off the fact that we don't have the infrastructure we need or the public services our citizens need, this province has taken on record debt like we have never seen before. This is what happens when a government has a broken fiscal structure and ties our vital public services to the price of a barrel of oil.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve a strong economy and a strong society and a few hundred billion dollars in the bank. The problem lies in the fact that we have been under new management far too many times in the past few years, with the same old 43-year-old Conservative government, with the same MLAs and the same ministers at the helm, with the same old ideas and the same policies that have gotten us into this mess.

This week's throne speech talks about new management. Well, what's really new is only four members, who aren't that new, and 75 per cent of the cabinet ministers comprised the last new management team. The speech promises the world to Albertans from all walks of life. It talks about saving money, paying down debt, no new taxes, with conservative principles and the Wildrose policy of capping spending at population growth and inflation, with \$75 oil and no plan to pay for this, no real details.

Mr. Speaker, this week's throne speech, unlike many recent throne speeches, also talks about accountability, which is a very good thing since they've been lacking accountability on the PC government side for far too long. But so far they show every indication of continuing the PC tradition of denying, delaying, and declining the opportunity to take truly progressive steps forward. The Premier has made it very clear that he's going to take very conservative steps forward.

The government needs to demonstrate a true commitment to accountability and will need to follow some Alberta Liberal solutions. Liberal solutions to true accountability are to support gay and straight alliances in every school where students want them. Liberal solutions to accountability are to phase out coal-fired electricity generation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions so we can improve our reputation on the international stage and get our pipelines to market. Alberta Liberal solutions call for public inquiries into the deaths of children in government care and missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Alberta Liberal solutions to true accountability mean improving access to information, fixing flawed whistle-blower legislation, and having an open and transparent public hiring and contract tendering system. Liberal solutions to accountability mean imposing stricter environmental monitoring and stiffer penalties for polluters, which will improve our environmental reputation.

Liberal solutions mean giving municipalities the tools they need to responsibly serve citizens in urban areas, where the majority of Albertans now live and almost all Albertans eventually congregate,

and it includes more respect and more revenue and a shared responsibility. Liberal solutions to accountability mean delivering the right kind of health care to the right patient at the right time. And, yes, that includes committing to rebuilding the Misericordia hospital, that will benefit not only the whole capital city but the whole health system.

Liberal solutions to accountability mean forensic audits of our expenditures to ensure that Albertans are getting value for their money, and forensic audits of our royalties to ensure that Albertans are collecting what they should be collecting for the resources that belong to the people. Liberal solutions to accountability also mean that we must fix the broken fiscal structure to pay for this. We must stop the overreliance on volatile resource revenue to pay the daily bills for essential public services and talk of tax fairness. We must put the word “progressive” back in this province by bringing in progressive income tax.

Mr. Speaker, despite \$75 oil, our province is still playing catch-up and still growing. This is not a time to cut back vital public services, delay projects, nickel and dime regular working Albertans and businesses, or rack up massive public debt. It's a time to keep building our province, getting the essential public services, and paying for today's bills today, not passing the bill to the next generation. These are the things the government needs to do. They are things we've asked them to do, and they are things the government still refuses to do.

You know, suddenly, true accountability looks like real work, doesn't it? It's not as easy as simply promising to sin no more. Accountability actually requires good evidence-based policies that allow for the repair and strengthening of vital public services and our budgeting practices as well as Alberta's poor environmental reputation. It also requires a commitment to justice, fairness, and the public good.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals believe we need accountability grounded in the understanding that a strong society is just as important as a strong economy. For example, Liberals understand that true accountability means fixing a public health system that is severely and chronically underfunded and literally bursting at the seams.

5:10

We need to get rid of school fees. We need to hire enough teachers and get those teachers the support that they need to educate our children, who are the future of our province. Our schools need to be built as community hubs, with affordable, high-quality, low-cost child care as well as the wraparound services – the school nurses, the mental health counsellors, the addiction counsellors, the social workers – to give our children the care and support they need and the teachers the support they need so that they can actually invest their time, spend their time, teaching. That will require probably one of the largest investments in Alberta history into funding and running our education system, not only building the buildings but also on the operational side of things.

Liberals believe that true accountability also means making amends for broken promises and betrayals such as last year's savage cuts to postsecondary institutions, which made an already severe lack of funding even worse. Our postsecondary students need lower tuition and fees. They need more grants and more bursaries. They need a chance to pay off their student loans if they live and pay taxes in Alberta. They also need more professors and teachers and more choice of programs. Mr. Speaker, innovation, technology, and research and development are absolutely essential to building a strong economy. The University of Alberta contributes 5 per cent of the GDP to our province, which is \$12 billion to \$15 billion. Societies that out-educate us today will

outperform us tomorrow. It's time to invest massively in postsecondary education.

Liberals believe their government must take responsibility for this province's chronic and acute health care access crisis. The PC government broke the health system, Mr. Speaker. Nobody else broke it; they did. Along with other front-line staff, I'd be happy to help by providing insights and solutions. Let's admit we have a broken system. Let's make sure we bring in world-class, nonprofit, community-based home care, subacute care, palliative care, hospice care, and long-term care. Let's stop privatizing community services. Let's get every Albertan a family doctor that works with a team of health professionals and nurse practitioners to keep people out of the system and bring in real accountability measures. And let's stop changing managers. Let's just fix the system.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals believe that true accountability also requires that the government deals fairly with cash-starved municipal governments. Alberta cities and towns need sustainable, predictable, adequate funding, and municipalities must be treated as equal partners and be given the respect, revenue, and shared responsibility in the MGA review.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Liberals believe that true accountability means standing up for students who find themselves bullied in the schools because of their sexuality. Discrimination against LGBTQ students is wrong, it's hurtful, and too often deadly. I hope this government's concept of accountability extends to voting for the protections contained in Liberal Bill 202 from the hon. member for the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. The Premier must stand up to the social conservative elements in his party and his base. Accountability sometimes entails courage, and we'll see if they have it.

Alberta Liberals are going to be talking a lot about accountability this session in order to teach this old PC government what it really means to be accountable. Accountability isn't just about stopping ignoring rules or stopping wasting tax dollars after being busted for repeated lapses in ethics and judgment. Accountability is more than that. It's more than: we shall not do what is wrong. Accountability is also, more importantly, about: we shall do what is right. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what is missing in the throne speech. So congratulations to the government on promising to sin no more, but what Albertans really need is for this government to truly embrace accountability by addressing the myriad crises created by their myriad mistakes and to truly focus, first, foremost, and finally, on what is public good.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta Liberals look forward until the next election to working with the government on supporting what makes sense, on offering amendments to things that they intend to do well but aren't fully thought of, and to fight hard on behalf of Albertans when the government is totally wrong. You can count on the Alberta Liberals to fight to build a better Alberta and a strong society and a strong economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see no takers.

Let us move to the next speaker, then, to an hon. representative from the government side. Anyone?

If not, then let us move on to the NDs. No one on the ND side right now?

Okay. Let's move on to Little Bow.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a while since I got up to such a warm audience all the time. On behalf of the constituents of Little Bow it's nice to get up and do a reply to the Speech from the Throne. I guess, like everything else, I'm always

happy to see some things in writing here that we've been working on for a little while.

We'll start off with the highlighted areas I went through, about improvements on intersections. In my own particular riding, in Coalhurst, for instance, and Nobleford, I've been working fairly diligently with the Minister of Transportation on some solutions there. It's nice to see that we can work on getting some improvements done there to help the constituents of Little Bow and also the people that travel through it.

Bridge funding, as the Leader of the Official Opposition had brought up, had been cut for a little while. It's about \$75 million when you guys do jump into budget considerations. At least you put it in here that you want to help out with the repairs in rural Alberta. It's about \$75 million a year that's needed for the next 10 years just to get them up to date from where they're at. In my riding alone we have just about 20 per cent of the bridges in this province due to the large irrigation going across those. I think it's a huge economic driver.

Also, one of the counties that's in my riding is Lethbridge county, which is the only county that has over \$1 billion in cash receipts a year. That was off the 2013 numbers, I guess. If you look at that – I mean, we look at falling oil prices. I think this is a prime time to sit here and figure out where we can reinvest into agriculture. Agriculture is the largest renewable resource we have in this province, and it's always a good place that we could be reinvesting into. I do give that to the minister of agriculture, who has always been good to work with, and to his department for always getting information back so that we can work positively to get solutions and things that we can do in this province.

One of the things I'd be remiss in not touching on: the little point of the bridge on 547. I was with the minister last week at the opening of that. I was very glad to see the bridge get up and going again. The sad part was that originally it only took a year to build that bridge, just over a hundred years ago, with the modern technology of horses and pulleys and stuff like that, but due to some great engineering and stuff we banged that back together in almost 16 months. We didn't quite rebuild the whole thing. But, you know, my constituents are happy to at least be able to travel across it. Sometimes you're just happy with what you get. I can tell you that a lot of constituents were disappointed that either the bridge wasn't totally rebuilt or that it wasn't rebuilt within a timely fashion. But, either way, it's going.

One of the things in this province that we need to do – and we talk about it in the throne speech – is that we'll make annual investments to enhance agricultural research and innovation and work on food processing. One of the things there is temporary foreign workers. This is something that we need to get together on. I think all parties in this House and even our independent member will come together as a group and say that we need to somehow press the federal government into solving this problem. I know the previous Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour – some days it changes around here – the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, was always a strong advocate on it, and I believe the Member for Calgary-Hays, the new minister, is also. These are key things that keep this province rolling.

I'm really hoping that the new Premier, with his past political ties federally, will somehow be able to pull this through and get something that's going to work. This isn't just something that affects Tim Hortons and McDonald's. Rural Alberta is getting crushed by this, whether it's small businesses in the hometown I'm from, Mossleigh, in the restaurant there alone, or the feedlots down by Lethbridge, which has the largest area for feedlot feeding in Alberta. We're short-staffed. We're short of people that want to work. We've have greenhouses. These are all things that need to

be done. I had a good conversation with a feedlot owner down there last week, and he said to me, "Ian, I don't care how it gets done." I said to him, "Provincially we're working on that." He goes, "That's nice to hear, but that doesn't help the four feed trucks that I have parked every day because I don't have people to sit in them."

5:20

We're struggling there. We have Cargill, which is one of the large food processors, and also JBS. We're short-staffed. We're running at about 70, 80 per cent there for staffing because we just don't have enough skilled labour or unskilled labour that want to work there. That's a huge economic driver in our whole province. Again, we look at things like the falling oil prices. I've got some fairly simple solutions: let's reinvest in rural Alberta. I think that the Premier in his throne speech has touched on some of that, which is good to see.

Market access, product innovation, and investment: those are key things also. When we're in a province that exports just about all of the things that we grow, whether it be meat, whichever meat it is – chicken, pork, or cattle – or grain, we need to be able to always find markets. That's something that I hope the government continues to carry on, finding some more markets, and I think that they have been looking into that.

One of the things we also need to touch on is the feeder associations loan guarantees. Now, in the Speech from the Throne the government has introduced a rural economic development action plan. Part of that is that they decided to raise the limit from \$500,000 individually to a million individually for people to get money from the Feeder Associations loans. Now, with the price of cattle going up to probably record highs right now, this is key, and it sounded like a great concept. The problem is that we still need to raise the loan guarantee from the province. I believe the province provides about \$750 million right now in loan guarantees.

These are key things to our cattle feeding market right now. I really hope that at some point either the minister or the Premier would take this as something that needs to be dealt with immediately. Right now current legislation allows for the President of Treasury Board to increase the amount of the loan guarantees just through an order in council. I don't think that there's a negative effect by doing this. We need to do it right away.

People always sit there and ask – it's not a handout; it's a loan guarantee. In over 77 years the loan-to-loss ratio has remained constant at .01 per cent. Now, if anybody in here was following the stock market, you're almost guaranteed not a loss on that. I'd definitely be more than happy to be active to work in any way, shape, or form to find a solution on that for our cattle feeding market. To put the extra money in there to jump it up to a million dollars per individual sounded great, but we're cutting the other side. There's just not as much money there for that.

I guess that if we want to look at rural beds and long-term care, I'm very happy to say that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has been in my riding and been doing lots of work with my constituents and talking about how to solve that.

Now, some of us might remember that back when we first got into this, in 2012, for me anyway, there was a little place called Carmangay that had a great long-term care centre. It got closed. Now, in case anybody has forgotten that – it was a nice way for me to learn how politics worked – since that time that building has been kept heated, kept air conditioned. A person checks on it once a day. There are almost 30 beds there; I think there are 27 or 29 beds. You could have it active almost immediately, within, I'd say, 30 days. Most of the staff are still in the area. If we want to

start looking into things that we can do to help rural Alberta and help our aging-in-place people, that's a prime place there. They've got a whole block there. You could add on to it. There are quite a few things there.

I think that as we went through that whole process, we all learned that sometimes politics keeps things open and that sometimes politics gets things closed. I'm not sure; I think it was a bit of both in that one in that they didn't keep it open. But I think this is a prime example that we can figure out. We can move forward and solve what happened before on that, and if we want to actually help out all Albertans that are aging and aging in place, this is probably a prime place we could do that at.

I'd hate to not put in a little plug for the Vulcan hospital also. There are some innovative people there that have figured out some sources for funding that would work with the government. They are more than happy to work with government and, again, have met with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who's come out and talked to them a couple of times and went a long way to roll out what we could do better together on that.

The throne speech touched on a couple of other things; you know, how to innovate and move forward on our high-quality food products. This summer a lot of people that were on some committees met over Fusarium. It's definitely a heated issue between northern and southern Alberta. For those that don't know, Fusarium is a fungus on seed. It's contentious, but at the end of the day in my riding it's a huge economic driver. There are a lot of seed growers down there. Now, for pedigreed seed growers that's where you're going to grow your foundation seed, and then that gets cleaned and shipped across the province or into other provinces. The challenge is that we have a zero per cent Fusarium allowance right now. We're in a spot right now where a lot of the larger seed companies won't invest that money into Alberta because they can't legally sell that seed if there's a trace of Fusarium.

Now, actually, it was a private member's bill. The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, now the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism, had brought it up. It definitely split the province. We had I don't know how many hours of meetings over this. My colleague from Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley and I could agree to disagree respectfully on what should be done. I think it's one that we can still tackle, and if this Premier is serious about getting the province pulled together, I think this is a key one.

It's a large economic driver, and when seed companies are pulling out from our province because they're scared because they can't do that, I think it's a pretty simple program if we can let the buyers decide what they want to do and through best management practices. I think that's something that in rural Alberta is, again, a driver that will help most people if we can come up with a positive solution. The problem with proroguing the Legislature like we did is that that was going to committee to come back, and now it's lost in the nether lands someplace. It's just – poof – gone. I'm hoping we can deal with that sooner rather than later. There's been a Fusarium Action Committee, since probably before I could shave, that's been in action, and nothing has ever really gotten rolling on it. I'm hoping that would be a key thing we can work on there.

You know, somewhat in closing here, I'm hoping that the new Premier – I guess we've got a new captain on the *Titanic*. It looks like he can steer it back around. I think everybody on the other side maybe saw the iceberg, and this was maybe the one time they ran back down and told him to hang a hard left or a hard right. [interjections] Hey, I'll give him credit. He's figured it out.

For a lot of the members on that side – we can all have a little fun in here; we've got to have a little fun at this job – at the end of the day you took quite a few pages out of our book, which is good. As a taxpayer in this province I'm happy that we figured out that we didn't need to replace licence plates, that we didn't need to do a lot of things, that we could probably get rid of the jets, our practice on how to account for the planes. [interjection] I never got to go on them. I didn't know what they actually looked like. Sorry about that.

We're going back to a simple finance program. I can distinctly remember sitting in here after a couple of the budgets – I'm just a farmer from Mossleigh, and I'm not real great with numbers – and the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert at the time, as the Treasury Board chairman, always liked to explain how we needed to have a couple of sets of books. I remember it didn't work really well for Enron. You can't do that, and I'm glad to see that the new Premier figured out that that's maybe not the best management practice we should have. We should have one set of books. So I'm congratulating everybody on that side for figuring out to keep it back the way it maybe should be done. On saying that, I guess we'll see.

You know, Bill 1 sounded good coming out. I'm hoping he's open to a lot of amendments on it because I think we can add quite a few things to that and do good things for Albertans with it. Other than that, I guess we'll see how the cards play out on this as the rest of the session rolls through.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing no one, I'll recognize Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a difference a day makes in politics. It's amazing. A few months ago we were dealing with the government in a most difficult time. Public confidence was waning considerably. If it wasn't at an all-time low, it was certainly heading to that point. A few months ago the Official Opposition was riding a wave of popularity as one scandal after another scandal plagued the government. Fast-forward to today, and what a change. After four by-elections the Official Opposition . . .

5:30

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but I neglected to catch a note here from the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore. Might we briefly revert to the introduction of guests before they leave the gallery?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hon. member, my sincere apologies to you and your guests. Please proceed. Thank you, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, for your understanding.

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, colleague. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the House visitors from the MD of Foothills. We have with us Reeve Larry Spilak, Councillor Suzanne Oel, Delilah Miller, Jason Parker, Rick Percifield, Ron Chase, and, from the organization itself, Ryan Payne and Harry Riva-Cambrin. These individuals are

residents of Highwood and Livingstone-Macleod. I ask that they receive the warm traditional welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, and thank you, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, for your co-operation in this regard and to all members. Please proceed with your speech, and our apologies for the interruption.

**Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**
(continued)

Ms Fenske moved, seconded by Mr. Ellis, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Colonel (Retired) Donald S. Ethell, OC, OMM, AOE, MSC, CD, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to talk about a couple of points that were raised in the Speech from the Throne. Most importantly, I want to really focus on the environment and property rights, which are pretty much some of the highlights that I focused on. There are many other issues that I'm sure some other members will pick up on later and comment on, but in particular the issue of the environment.

Coming up with a climate change strategy and promising to deliver on a climate change framework: this is to me absolutely paramount. It is a double-edged sword that provides good on both sides of that sword. One is that it is paramount in the sense that it's good for all Albertans to have clean air, to have clean water, to have an environment that improves their quality of life.

The other side of that sword is access to international markets. Whether we like it or not, the international markets are dictating that we have to do something to lead in our environmental rules, regulations, and demonstrate that we are a leader in the world. The beauty behind this is that our industries have the technology. They have the expertise. What we need is the leadership to bring that forward to make that work because when you even look at these pipelines that we struggle to get built, what prevents that, what is the argument that has always been the obstacle that we had to overcome is the fact that our environmental record was there to obstruct. We have that ability.

So for this Premier to step up and say that we are under new management and we are going to tackle that, there is something that came to mind. It's actually interesting because you've heard it, and you'll probably hear it again. What is different from this government than any other previous government? It's a valid question. Albertans want an answer to that, and it's not an answer you can give verbally. It's an answer that you have to demonstrate that you're actually going to do that. So the test is: will this government act? What is good to know is simply this. What the opposition has been complaining about, this government has now acted on.

They complained about the licence plate. Done. Check mark. It's gone. They complained about the airlines. Done. Check mark. It's gone. They complained about fiscal management, and boy I'm going to talk about the opposition and their fiscal management policies in a second. Stay tuned because this is going to be

entertaining because the hypocrisy of how this takes place is beyond me. [interjections]

Now, see, the beauty is, Mr. Speaker, that I actually have three cease-and-desist orders against me from the Wildrose. I'm not allowed to speak up, but I'm free from that now. [interjections]

An Hon. Member: Get a lawyer.

Mr. Anglin: No. I don't need a lawyer. I'm free. I'm free. I'm not allowed to talk about the nepotism in the party. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon members, we're about to conclude a historic day here of some of the highest level of decorum, and it all starts with giving a bait and taking a bait. For heaven's sake. The hon. member has the floor. Let him have it. Let him have it all. Please, no more interjections.

Hon. member, please continue.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I'm not allowed to talk about the nepotism in my former party, and I won't talk about the nepotism. I'll stay with that cease-and-desist order. I'm not allowed to talk about how criticism of a party would force you out of that party or how criticism of the way they manage themselves would somehow silence you.

I've heard this before, Mr. Speaker, where these PC MLAs were criticized for not standing up and speaking out against some of the policies. What we do know from the history of this Chamber is that some of them actually did come over here and sit as independents as an objection or as a protest, whatever they personally decided. It was directed at governance, how this government is going to act with integrity or with credibility. How are you going to demonstrate that? That is the key test for this new government, for this new Premier. It's really important that they stay on this because when I hear the criticism about fiscal management, I think it's a valid criticism. It is important for all Albertans that this be transparent, that there be accountability. It's nice to know we have an act, but I will tell you that it's hard to take when it comes from a party that takes and spends its own money on what I would call a legal slush fund. I would wonder if Elections Alberta would take exception to it.

Mr. Wilson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Point of Order
Relevance**

Mr. Wilson: I rise on Standing Order 23(b)(i). The member is speaking to matters other than the question under discussion. Clearly, he is responding or attempting to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'm not sure of anywhere in there where internal party matters and/or the view of the Official Opposition are noted, and I would ask that you remind the member to keep his comments relevant at such time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. I had just, seconds before, in fact raised the motion and flagged it for the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, who was speaking, and I was about to stand up and say: please make your speech relevant to the motion of the throne speech; otherwise, I'd have to rule you out of order and ask someone else to take your place speaking. With that in mind, please be reminded of relevance and continue on now with that train of thought.

Debate Continued

Mr. Anglin: Oh, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The relevance is in the context and the contrast of dealing with fiscal management. I know the member doesn't like it, but I'm not here to be liked or disliked. What I'm here for is to bring truth to the contrast of fiscal management. It has to happen because if you're going to criticize somebody for not spending money properly, then you have to take into context that when you put money into a fund and you pressure people to put money into a fund and you don't even provide those people with accountability – and that goes to the accountability of the throne speech – and you give money so that it influences a political reality or a political perception to your advantage, I tell you, it is an interesting contrast. When the government brings up an issue of transparency, what I would say is that those who criticize the government should also exercise transparency, and I don't see that, actually. I mean, there has to be a balance.

The government is forced to balance that, and we should all be forced to balance that. When we talk about government, granted, we're talking about the cabinet, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is that we're all part of that government. When we are the opposition, when we are the backbenchers our job is to hold them accountable. It doesn't mean that we act differently and try to hold them to a different standard.

I will tell you this, Mr. Speaker. I have not yet seen anyone on that side actually speak up against their government and then be underhandedly thrown out via a rigged election process. No one has ever stood up and told me they've had one of those, but I would tell you that that would be absurd. I wouldn't expect that from over there. I'm not sure how that accountability measures out. What I'm looking for from this government is credibility. I would want this government to demonstrate exactly what it says. Now we're at a point in time which I think is a turning point.

5:40

When I see this government get accused of picking the low-hanging fruit, I say: yes, they did. They fixed a couple of things that the opposition said: please fix. And what I heard from the opposition was: yeah, but they did it. That's what we asked them to do.

Now there are some major points coming along. I will tell you that when the Premier brings out a property rights bill and heralds that property rights bill and that property rights bill is going to repeal Bill 19 – we refer to it as Bill 19, but it's the Land Assembly Project Area Act. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I travelled around this province before I was elected, the last two years. I travelled to 91 communities. I held 266 town hall meetings. I spoke about Bill 19. The minister of agriculture was at some of these meetings. More than one minister was there. I discussed it, and I debated it. And when I hear the opposition say that it wasn't good enough, I'm here to tell you that it's great. It's outstanding. I want the thousands of Wildrose Party members that I signed up at my meetings to know that that is a good bill.

I fought against that Bill 19, and I debated against that Bill 19, and to have them repeal that Bill 19, that is just. That is a prime example of taking action. Is it enough? Never. I agree. We always want more. I don't want this government to be perfect. I want this government to strive for perfection. That's all I'm asking. When I travelled around this province and I spoke to thousands of Albertans, what I did find out from those thousands of Albertans, Mr. Speaker: they had some uncommon sense of fairness, and it was a common virtue. They understand due process of law. They understood the argument about property rights. So to have this

Premier step up and say, "We're going to start dealing with it," to me that is a good start. To have the opposition, who rode that on my back and on the backs of thousands of other Albertans, saying that they were opposed to Bill 19, stand up and say that now, all of a sudden, they're not – I don't understand that.

I am definitely going to support that bill when it comes along, and I'm going to ask them to do more. I want the thousands of Albertans that I spoke to, who supported me and supported the Wildrose in fighting this bill, to take note of that. That is really, really important in the progress of restoring property rights in this province. I commend the government for bringing that forward in the throne speech, and I commend the government for following through.

I don't tolerate hypocrisy. No one has even been able to shut me up on the issue of hypocrisy. I doubt it ever happens. But I am not going to talk about the nepotism that I got the cease-and-desist order on.

So with that I want to talk about the environment.

Dr. Brown: You've got parliamentary privilege here, Joe.

Mr. Anglin: Well, fiscal prudence is really important. Yes. I will stay with fiscal prudence. But I will tell you that there is humour behind it, Mr. Speaker. When a member of the opposition hires an image consultant and it doesn't work out too great, that's a waste of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, if I may.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, I presume you're rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Wilson: A point of order, Mr. Speaker, again rising on 23(b)(i). I have no idea how this hon. member is trying to tie his comments to the response from the Speech from the Throne, and I would again ask you to remind him to keep his comments relevant.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Once again, seconds before the Calgary-Shaw member rose, I had just lifted up and indicated to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to please make your comments relevant to certain sections of the throne speech. I realize that we give a lot of latitude, more than perhaps any other legislation, when replies to throne speeches are being given. Truly, we do give a lot of latitude. However, even I'm finding that stretch a little bit difficult today. So if you could zoom in on the throne speech, which part in particular you're commenting on, that would be helpful. The point is well made by Calgary-Shaw.

Debate Continued

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Point well taken. I will zoom in. But as it has been said here in this Chamber, have fun. I will cease to have fun at the moment, and I'll get a little bit more serious. But I'll be back to "fun" later, and then you'll have to wane again.

What I want to talk about is the seriousness of the issue of climate. The Premier did bring up in the throne speech issues of flood and flood mitigation, and what I want to say is that it is important. Some of the things the government has done in this area have helped. We are flood mapping. That is important. But

what we also have to do is that we have to study the logging in the high country. To ask a very simple question: is that affecting the flooding? I have to tell you that it's a valid question. We do need to study it. We need to look at that because some of these floods, the flash floods in particular – it's only logical to make an assumption that there is a connection, but we can't make the connection unless we study it. That has to fit into this flood mitigation system somehow, someday. That is absolutely important.

But going back to the credibility of our environmental policies, I will tell you this. The environmental rules and regulations in this province are good. What we lack is in the enforceability, and this government needs to look at that to make the system work better. We cannot – we cannot – have a track record where we say: our policies are good, our laws are good, but we're not getting the job done because we're not enforcing. That is a weak spot that this government needs to look at when it wants to set up a track record of environmental stewardship.

We're not in a position where we can follow. Because of our industry, because of our economy we are in a position where we must lead. We have no other choice in this matter. We must lead in this category if we're to be successful. That's where this government needs to strive. We need to have clean water, we need to have clean air, and we need to have enforcement.

We need a fair playing field. The carbon offset system in this province is a clear example of that. It is a playing field that needs a lot of attention by this government because the audits being conducted in that industry are not adding up. When companies can sell offsets for more CO₂ than they produce, something is wrong. Somebody needs to look into it and to make the system work or to deal with it in a more constructive way.

All I can tell you is that it is good, Mr. Speaker, that this is recorded by *Hansard*, because I'm not recording it. [interjections] I did say I'd come back and have fun. I apologize.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I can hardly wait to make this offer. Does anyone wish to take up 29(2)(a)? We will go to the hon. Government House Leader, under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Denis: Thanks for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre what experience he has with flood mapping.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, if you wish to reply.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, flood mapping is new to me as I'm watching the government roll it out. Thank you to the minister of environment for notifying me of the flood mapping – I would call it an open house – in Sundre. It is the most important constituency location for me dealing with floods. So we had Environment and SRD people and the contractors down there with all the different flood maps, explaining to the public how they did it, answering questions. It was extremely important, because we had a very large turnout, and it's a huge issue.

There are other issues that are really important. I'm hoping this government will expand upon them: to look at not just the flood mapping but to go beyond that and look into causes of floods as far as what I said earlier, what the logging does, what development does along those waterways. That's extremely important to keep this under control.

Again, Mr. Speaker, like everything else, my biggest criticisms of previous PC governments all had to do with process, due process, having a process that was fair and just. You don't always

get the decision you want, but at least there's a process. That's important. The opposition could take a lesson from process, but they don't hear that just yet.

Anyway, it is the same in property rights, absolutely. If you take a look at what's being repealed in Bill 1, if you look at the processes there, they actually took those out of section 15 of the Government Organization Act, so when we repeal that bill, we'll go back to the Government Organization Act. Those processes there, in my view, are far fairer and just for landowners who are affected by any type of expropriation, and that's why I am so supportive of the bill as one of the best starts in dealing with this issue.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll sit down. Thanks.

5:50

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, did you have a point that you wanted to make or a question to ask under 29(2)(a), or are you satisfied?

Mr. Lukaszuk: No. I think I've heard enough, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You're satisfied. Okay.

Anyone else under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing no one, let us move on then to Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For some reason something comes to mind about why people go to NASCAR races, to see the car wrecks. I think we've just had an example of that.

This is an interesting time in the history of our province, Mr. Speaker. The third different governing Premier presented a Speech from the Throne, over a six-year period without a change in reigning party. That's got to be some kind of record. To paraphrase P.T. Barnum, who was obviously wrong, apparently you can fool all the people all the time or at least enough of them to form a majority government.

But all kidding aside I think we can feel the sense of relief here in Alberta and in this House. The Wildrose helped expose a number of embarrassing facts that proved the necessity of a new leader across the floor. I know that all Albertans are grateful to us; they just have a funny way of showing it in by-elections. Seriously, though, we all know that things couldn't carry on the way they were, with the significant waste, entitlement, and disconnect between the government and the taxpayers.

We know that no matter how red a Tory your leader may be, it has to be a whole lot better than what we've endured over the past six years. Alberta couldn't really wait till the next general election to have some of these serious issues of waste and mismanagement addressed. In his first action our new Premier demonstrated his willingness to think outside the PC box and borrowed some good ideas from the Wildrose playbook. The government air fleet is gone, and the associated waste and misuse has ended.

The Premier acknowledged that we still live in Wild Rose Country, saving millions on unnecessarily removing that pesky reminder and free advertising of the Official Opposition on every licensed vehicle in our province. [interjections] You don't think that was a factor? I'm sure I wasn't the only one who was glad for many reasons that the Alberta Party wasn't the Official Opposition, or the over-the-hill, out-of-touch gang may have suggested removing the name of our own province from the licence plates.

In an acknowledgment of the burden of bureaucracy our new Premier set up another layer of it to help small-business people figure out which department is making their lives the most miserable, under the guise of: "Hi. I'm from the government, and I'm here to help you." I wonder: were existing personnel redeployed

or new ones hired? Was someone promoted to become the manager? Does she or he have a secretary and an assistant?

I'm sure we can expect to see other Wildrose ideas borrowed, repackaged, and claimed as original. But we're okay with that because it's not about who gets the credit; it's about doing what's right for all Albertans, and that's what Wildrose is all about.

We see now a new bill addressing the issue of property rights, one of the three core universal rights, a right that was stunningly left out of the repatriated Constitution. Criticism has already befallen this new Premier's Bill 1. Hopefully, he will support and implement Motion 501 from my colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka. It will in concurrence with Lethbridge MP Jim Hillyer's private member's bill in our federal Parliament amend the Constitution for Alberta and entrench property rights.

This right has been a protected, cherished right and acknowledged in common law as inalienable since 1215, at the signing of the Magna Carta, a right that has been legislatively trampled on by iterations of our government with full knowledge and little respect: Bill 19, the Land Assembly Project Area Act; Bill 24, Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act; Bill 36, Alberta Land Stewardship Act; Bill 50, Electric Statutes Amendment Act; and more recently Bill 2, Responsible Energy Development Act.

Let's take a few moments to consider just a few of the costs and problems of this calculated regulatory taking. Under Bill 19, now scheduled and announced to be gone, the government gave itself the right to freeze Albertans' land indefinitely, restricting rightful owners even from building a garage on their own property. I commend the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for his tireless efforts in lobbying against that bill.

Under Bill 24 the government stripped Albertans of the historic right to control the pore space under their soil, which can be a major source of revenue for those who lease their underground for gas storage, for example.

Although Bill 50 was repealed, it was too late. Damage had already been done under this nightmare legislation to the tune of \$16 billion plus and counting, and new power lines, many of them believed to be unnecessary, went through with no public hearings or needs assessment.

Bill 36, the worst of all, tells Albertans loudly and clearly that the government has no issue with tearing up water licences, grazing leases, natural resource leases, and much more simply because the minister may feel like it.

Of course, all this comes without the right to compensation or appeal for Albertans who are victims of these terrible policies and with no access to courts. Let me illustrate. Keith Wilson uses the example of a dairy farm owned by a family who holds the title to the land; a confined feeding operation, approval issued by the Natural Resources Conservation Board; and a water licence. Bill 36 calls the latter two rights statutory consents. It used to be the case that confined feeding operation approvals could only be rescinded under certain circumstances such as the surrender of the approval or the sale or the abandonment of the land. Well, the government argues that by rescinding these statutory consents, this family's title to the land is not affected. It's obvious that that

farming operation will no longer be viable without them, which violates the exploitation component of property rights. Without the protection of statutory consents there cannot be a functional economy.

According to Mr. Wilson under the new land-use framework the government can decide what Albertans can and cannot do on private land in a way that has never been seen before in Alberta and possibly in any parliamentary democracy. It used to be that Albertans, like most people in free societies, were able to do whatever they wanted on their land as long as no activities were generally harmful. Now Albertans may only conduct activities on their land that achieve specific outcomes determined by cabinet, and even if that overturns something the government had explicitly permitted, either yesterday or generations ago, you have no guarantees for compensation.

Let me tell you about my friend Sharon Unger. She and her husband built a lovely home overlooking a picturesque valley with an unobstructed view of the Rocky Mountains. A couple of years ago they were in a position where they needed to sell their house. They had received a market value offer, but it was withdrawn when the purchasers discovered something that they themselves didn't know. AltaLink was considering the construction of transmission lines right across the valley and their beautiful view. Attempts to get a definitive answer from AltaLink on which of the three possible routes being considered was the one fell on deaf ears. She was desperate. The Property Rights Advocate was unable to help. To this day this injustice remains unresolved. This multibillion-dollar company, guaranteed a 9-plus per cent return on all its costs by this government, could have bought this house with petty cash and added it to the expenses and boosted its own profits.

Why is this right fundamental to all Albertans, no matter where they live or how they earn a living? What is property? Everything you own. You worked hard for your money. It's a tangible representation of the value society and the free market placed on your time, talents, and energy. You use it to purchase food, clothing, shelter, transportation, entertainment, escape, whatever. Whose stuff is all that? Easy answer – duh – it's yours.

Should you be allowed to enjoy the fruits of your labours? Should there be restrictions on your use and enjoyment? Well, no matter what the speedometer on your car says, for safety's sake, yours and others, there are some limits.

But what about real property? Well, you can't build your house too close to your neighbours or the sidewalk or have view-obstructing trees or fences on a corner lot, and so on. Maybe the style is restricted by the community or neighbourhood association. But these rules are all in place, or if changes are contemplated, you have a right to a say about it or the courts for redress or appeal.

What if the government said you could no longer access water or sewer lines? Would that affect your use and enjoyment?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House now must stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m. to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

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