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The 28th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 25, 2014

Issue 6a

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 63 Wildrose: 14 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 25, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, help us to always do the right thing as we journey through this maze of life for we are but servants chosen by others to bear the duties, the challenges, and the burdens of public life. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three special visitors from the vibrant Ukrainian community of our great province. They are in Edmonton at the Legislature to commemorate the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act. Seated in the Speaker's gallery is Dr. Walter Zaryckyj, executive director for the Center for US-Ukrainian Relations, who is here from New York and our guest from the ceremony this afternoon. Also here are Olesia Luci-Andryjowycz, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council, and Slavka Shulakewych, the provincial co-ordinator of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. I would ask them all to rise now and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much. It's an honour for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you members of the Punjabi Media Association of Alberta. Sitting in your gallery are Mr. Gursharan Buttar, newly minted president of the association; Rajwinder Klair, member; Kulmit Sangha, vice-president of the association; Gurbhalinder Sandhu, general secretary of the association; Parduman Gill, member of the association; Navtej Bains, member; Ranjit Power, also a member. I would also like to applaud them for raising \$65,000 and tons of food for Edmonton's Food Bank. This was done as part of the birthday celebration of our first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, and his teachings of work, worship, and donating to charities. I would like to send a huge thank you to the Sikh community for their generous support. To witness this celebration, Mr. Speaker, were yourself and the members for Edmonton-Manning and Edmonton-Mill Woods. They have all risen. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Let us go on with school groups, starting with the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to welcome from St. Theresa Catholic middle school in my constituency of Sherwood Park 55 visitors in both galleries, and they are accompanied today by their teachers, Luba Eshenko, Cynthia Metzger, Mike Miskiw, Theresa Walker, and their helpers, Mr. Curtis Danilak, Mr. Brent McEwan, Ms Kelsey Tucker. Our good friend from Bonnyville-Cold Lake's baby sister teaches at this

school as well, which should be noted. Anyway, if you could please rise, and the Assembly will give you the warm traditional welcome. Thanks for being here today.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you 15 students from NAIT, including Ms Lamya Asiff, Dylan Wolfinger, Mike Gough, Cayla Ellsworth, Kennedy Pawluk, Jeff Elkerbout, Chris Mullen, Joel Barlund, Jayson Shermack, Taylor Braat, Alyssa Petryshyn, Kalie MacIntosh, Brett Bohl, and Marika Friesen. If they could all stand, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 15 members of the Lung Association of Alberta and Northwest Territories. November is Lung Awareness Month, and 2014 marks the 75th anniversary of the Lung Association of Alberta and Northwest Territories. Representing the association, they are here today to bring awareness to respiratory illness and lung disease. Earlier today they demonstrated a spirometry test here in the Legislature, which I think I failed, for the benefit of educating me and others present about the Lung Association. I ask that each individual rise when I call their name and receive the traditional warm welcome from this Assembly: Leigh Allard, Gina Ibach, Nina Snyder, Jeff Cummings, Kristin Matthews, Dr. Marc Bibeau, Dr. Mohit Bhutani, Dr. Mark Anselmo, Dr. Mike Stickland, Darlene Gallant, Joan Branscombe, Alfred Branscombe, Tim Penstone, Susan Penstone, and Katelyn Penstone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health, your second introduction.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of visitors from the strategic policy branch of Alberta Health. The strategic policy branch creates strategic policy capacity within the department through policy development, policy co-ordination, and other corporate functions to support department priorities and activities and drive out work under the department's strategic directions. The branch also co-ordinates and facilitates Alberta Health's activities and engagements with intergovernmental partners to advance strategic priorities and influence pan-Canadian discussions on health care issues. Please give them the customary Assembly warm welcome as I call out their names. Joining us here today are Meghann Eagle, Jeanie Casault, Sue Gadag, Brenna Smith, Rhianne McKay, Karen Lamminen, and James Biggs.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce 18 individuals who this morning graduated from peace officer training. These new occupational health and safety peace officers will join their colleagues in enforcing this province's workplace safety rules. Their work helps to ensure that Albertans return home safely at the end of every workday. Five officers from today's graduating class have joined us, and I ask that they rise and remain standing as I introduce them to you and through you to all members of this Assembly: Mitch Bourgeault, Shirley Green, Carol Southwood, Randy Gauthier, Rob LeRouzc. I'm pleased to

introduce them to you, and I ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Scott: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly some Albertans making a difference in the fight against multiple sclerosis in Alberta. Today I am pleased to introduce Mrs. Julie Kelndorfer, her son Joshua, and Mr. Neil Pierce, representing the MS Society, Alberta and Northwest Territories division. Mrs. Kelndorfer is an Albertan living with MS, and on November 5 I was honoured to share the podium with her and announce our government's support for a \$1.4 million MS research fund. At that announcement Julie spoke with passion not about how MS affects her but about how it impacts her loved ones, especially her son Joshua. She is the director of government and community relations for the MS Society of Canada. With her today is Mr. Neil Pierce, president of the MS Society, Alberta and Northwest Territories division. He played an important role in contributing to our government's Way Forward plan for addressing MS in Alberta. I ask my guests to rise and for all the members of this Assembly to give them the traditional warm greeting.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Oberle: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Mark Scholz. Mark is president of the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, an association that represents all of the land-based drilling operations in Canada and 98 per cent of the service rig operations. Their mission is to be the unified voice of the Canadian drilling and service rig industry, promoting safer and more efficient operations through advocacy, communications, products, and services. I look forward to meeting with the association later today to discuss the 2015 drilling forecast and how together we can move this critical industry forward. Mr. Scholz is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that he rise and that we give him the warm traditional welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Young: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly five passionate advocates for seniors in our province and members of the Elder Advocates of Alberta. I would like to thank Ruth Adria, founder of Elder Advocates, as well as four other members of her organization – Mary Pelech, Kerry Modin, Barry Snell, and Shauna McHarg – for all the work they do for seniors in this province. I'd ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you. It's a privilege to introduce an extraordinary and gutsy constituent of Edmonton-South West, probably one of the most positive girls I've ever met. Now, Mr. Speaker, she's overcome a lot to have this positive attitude. When she was five years old she started having symptoms of Crohn's disease. However, she wasn't diagnosed until her family took her to the Stollery hospital emergency room on Christmas Eve of 2012. This

began a year of blood work, vitamins, trying different medications, and steroids.

This may stop many girls in their tracks; however, not this girl. She has incredible determination and spirit. She has since done everything from raising money for Crohn's with a lemonade stand with her brother to being honorary chair of the Gutsy Walk, which took place June 8 in Rundle park and raised close to \$160,000. She is aware of the struggles ahead of her and asks questions about her disease daily, but she's been able to bounce back into activities like soccer and swimming with the same vigour she once had, and nothing makes her happier. Mr. Speaker, this girl is Grace Whitfield, and it is my absolute honour to call her a fighter and a friend. I ask her and her father, Wade; mother, Christa; and brother Tyler to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, did you have another introduction? Perhaps later? Okay. Thank you.

Are there others? The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my guests from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees pay and social equity committee. This committee focuses on the crucial task of lobbying the government to enact legislation which will force employers to pay equal salaries for equal work. Many of the classifications that are undervalued and underpaid are traditionally women's work – for example, house-keeping, secretarial, and child care – leading to an ever-growing pay gap in Alberta. Pay inequality leads to social inequality, as we have seen. I would like to ask my guests to rise as I call their names: LeeAnn Boudreau, Rhonda Chatman, Phyllis Faulkner, Terry Nicholson-Knudson, Val Whelen, and Ginger Woeppel. I'd like my colleagues in the Assembly to join me in welcoming them to our Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Holodomor Memorial Day

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta and Ukraine have ties that are held firm by blood, history, and culture. There are communities throughout our great province that have a proud Ukrainian heritage, and Alberta has a large Ukrainian population that is proud to share their culture with us as they embrace their Albertan identity.

I myself am a Ukrainian-Albertan, and it is a true honour for me to acknowledge the sixth anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act. Passed unanimously in 2008, the act commemorates and remembers the millions of Ukrainian men, women, and children who were forced into starvation and death between 1932 and 1933 by the barbaric and brutal man-made famine of Joseph Stalin's Soviet regime.

Known as Holodomor, which means extermination by means of starvation in Ukrainian, this forced famine cannot be called anything but an act of genocide. The stories are horrifying. Farmers, citizens of villages and towns were forced to fill unrealistic and exorbitant government quotas, that left them without food to feed themselves and their families. Those who refused saw their crops, livestock, food, and homes confiscated.

Those that attempted to hold anything back, whether it was a handful of grain or a stalk of wheat, were arrested, exiled, or even executed. People starved to death, dying in the streets and in their homes. Through it all soldiers patrolled the borders, ensuring that no one could search for food elsewhere. A little-known chapter of human history, this dark and evil act must never be repeated and must always be remembered.

In Alberta the fourth Saturday of every November is known as Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day. On this day we remember the fallen victims and those who survived. I urge every member here and all Albertans to remember this important day. Doing so will remind us of our great fortune to be granted such freedom in Canada, with a powerful respect for human rights and multiculturalism. In remembering this tragedy, we can ensure a bright and fully accepting future for all Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Misericordia Community Hospital

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A chicken sandwich, a warm bowl of soup, a bag of chips, a chance to feel normal: this is what a visit to the cafeteria means for patients either strung to a hospital bed for days or weeks or filled with anxiety awaiting treatment in the emergency room. I've seen it first-hand. On more than one instance I've stared into the eyes of a friend or a loved one, their eyes exhausted from all the checkups, the pokes, the prodding, and all the questions. Having the opportunity to escape the sounds of a busy hospital floor and retreat to the normalcy of the cafeteria room, fondly referred to as the kitchen table, where they can order food and see families gather around them, has proven to be nothing more than therapeutic.

That's why when the ceiling was literally falling in on the cafeteria at the Misericordia hospital, it meant more than just a day free of comfort food. The third floor in over a year did more than just close off sections of the hospital and impact the emergency room; it pulled away a critical resource for family members, patients, and front-line workers. While doctors and nurses were pushed to the brink, patients were forced to stay away, and families were stuck in the hospital watching a building literally bursting at the seams.

With a billion dollars spent on sole-source contracts and \$250 million spent on consultants for things like executive coaching, the fact that this government has left almost \$50 million on the table in deferred maintenance costs at the Misericordia is nothing more than disgraceful, and it's hurting patients. Alberta Health Services has listed this as a priority, but for some reason it still hasn't been addressed. Mr. Speaker, more inaction on the Misericordia is nothing short of irresponsible. The patients are exhausted, scared, and looking for relief, and they deserve more than this.

The Speaker: I understand we're going to Calgary-West next, followed by Calgary-Currie.

Moosehide Campaign

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women we mark the start of an initiative to address and prevent violence against aboriginal women and children in Alberta. Today the Alberta government in partnership with the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association announced the Alberta launch of the Moosehide campaign.

The campaign asks aboriginal and nonaboriginal men alike to wear swatches of moosehide as a demonstration of their commitment to end violence toward aboriginal women and children. As a father of a Métis daughter I am moved and proud to stand here today and see my colleagues wearing these swatches. These swatches pledge to make Alberta a safer place for not only aboriginal women and children but for women and children in every community.

Our government has announced a \$75,000 grant to support the Moosehide campaign. This will expand Ontario's I Am a Kind Man project into our local communities. I Am a Kind Man is a First Nations run program that works with community members to help instill traditional aboriginal values among men and boys. The vast majority of offenders who commit acts of violence on women are men. We as men need to emphasize our positive and active role in both addressing this important issue and how we are working hard to eliminate violence against women. Aboriginal women are three times more likely to experience violence than other women. Stats provided by the Native Women's Association of Canada show that although these women make up 4 per cent of the population, they make up 16 per cent of all murdered women on record, and this is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Today our government has asked Alberta to take action and join the Moosehide campaign. Together we can make Alberta a safer place, where aboriginal women and children can thrive and live fulfilling lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

1:50

Sonshine House

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sonshine house in Calgary-Currie is a second-stage shelter that provides a one-year residential and counselling program for women and children that are fleeing domestic violence and abuse. Sonshine house ensures that women and their children are kept safe from life-threatening, abusive situations. A second-stage shelter differs from our province's emergency shelters and transitional shelters in that a second-stage shelter provides long-term residence and counselling that aims at assisting women end that cycle of violence and reintegrate into their communities before becoming a domestic homicide statistic.

Unlike emergency shelters, Sonshine is funded independent of government. In 2004 donors came forward and helped Sonshine purchase and renovate a residential shelter. In 2007 a 24-unit, fully furnished suite facility was opened. Sonshine is currently working diligently to raise the remaining \$200,000 in order to complete a child therapy program, the only program in our province that deals solely with trauma associated with children who experience violence in the home.

Mr. Speaker, the only way we will break the inheritance of the cycle of violence is to treat the psychological consequences that mark our children. We know that children who have been exposed to family violence are more vulnerable to delinquency and social, emotional, psychological, and cognitive problems that have long-term effects on not only our children but on our society, which leads me to an important point. Second-stage shelters are an important part of ending domestic violence in our province because they not only remove women and children from dangerous and violent situations; they allow them to move past these situations completely. So I am committing myself to encouraging a shift in prioritizing second-stage shelters and wholeheartedly join those at Sonshine in this quest.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank them for the work that they do.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Let us begin with the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Health System Administration

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has asked Albertans to judge his government on its progress. Well, Alberta Health Services was in front of the Public Accounts Committee today. What they said was enough to make Albertans queasy. There has been no progress at AHS. Wildrose has for years pointed out that the senior layers of management at AHS are bloated with executives. AHS said that they'd fix it. They announced that 70 VPs were being let go. Well, today we learned that they were just retitled. It seems that management has spent more time in the last year dreaming up new job titles than fixing the system. Does the Premier think that's progress?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to a patient-focused health care system. It's for that reason that we have a new minister who is very hands on, who has the courage and the vision to move forward to deal with some of the issues that we face and the challenges that we face in terms of the existing health care delivery system. I have full confidence in this minister. He's on top of his portfolio, he knows exactly what he's doing, and he'll deal with these issues.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've never heard that before.

The senior management layers at AHS are a mess. Former CEOs Chris Eagle and Duncan Campbell were paid as advisers, but there's no evidence that they did any work. Former CFO Allaudin Merali was the proverbial fox looking after the financial henhouse. Between them these failed execs took home almost \$2.3 million this year. Today we also learned that Covenant Health is restructuring and laying off five front-line long-term care workers. Is the Premier proud that the health system is better at paying executives to do nothing than looking after our seniors?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, it's very important to understand that Covenant Health is an independent organization that delivers tremendous health care to Albertans, whether it's in continued care or acute care. They're doing all they can to make sure they run an efficient, effective operation. I think they're allowed to operate their business the way they think they should. We support that.

Thank you.

Ms Smith: I think the Health minister misses the point. AHS management is a mess. We were promised efficiency; we've gotten everything but. There's been a revolving door at the top, and a lack of progress shows it. In its 2013 business plan AHS promised that they would keep staff growth to an absolute minimum, zero, in fact. Well, the 2014 AHS annual report shows that this year AHS managed to add a thousand new employees. Does the Health minister have any idea how many of these new workers were doctors and nurses and how many were just more bureaucrats?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services is committed to delivering the best health service in this country. Our province is growing by a hundred thousand people per year. We need to make sure that we have adequate service in all our various facilities across the province. This is a very difficult task as it's hard to find a variety of new people to do those jobs as our province is growing so quickly. We will do all we can to ensure that every Albertan is taken care of in an effective way. Our health care system is the best.

The Speaker: Second set of main questions.

Long-term Care for Seniors

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, this Premier asked Albertans to judge its government on its progress, once again, so it's now time for some progress questions on seniors' care. Wildrose has repeatedly called this government to account for its divorce by nursing home policy. This government takes married seniors in long-term care and forces them into separate nursing homes up to a hundred kilometres away from their home. This is devastating for seniors and for their families. The government keeps promising to end this callous practice. Has there been any actual progress made?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that Albertans have been very clear that they want a stronger emphasis on seniors and seniors' care in this province, and we've got a Premier and a government that's listening. [interjection] If anyone is paying attention, they would see that even at the time that the Premier was reducing the size of cabinet by 30 per cent, he created a stand-alone Seniors ministry and gave that Seniors ministry purview over the housing portfolio from Municipal Affairs and from the affordable supportive living initiative. [interjections] Through the work that we're going to do with those entities and with Health Services, we're going to be able to do some great things on this file.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's customary to give the person who has the floor your full attention without interruptions. I didn't hear any interruptions when the hon. leader was asking the question. It would be very nice if we had no interruptions when someone is trying to answer it.

First supplemental.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's like it's the first time we ever asked this question. We keep hearing the government say that they've made progress on the divorce by nursing home issue, but we get letters that show that this is clearly not the case. All over Alberta there is either a 100-kilometre rule or an 80-kilometre rule. Surely, one of our several hundred AHS bureaucrats can figure out how to keep couples together. This isn't rocket science. Why hasn't the government made any progress on this simple management task?

Mr. J. Johnson: My understanding is that there is progress being made. There is more progress to be made, no question about that. AHS has eliminated the 100-mile rule with respect to allocation of seniors. Mr. Speaker, if you look at some of the things we've accomplished just in the last two months, including the \$180 million for 1,500 ASLI beds and long-term care beds; the \$70 million for safety with respect to our seniors' facilities; Willow Square, the \$20 million announcement that we just made; the \$160 million announcement for rural lodge renewals – this is exactly one of the issues that the Premier has asked us to try to tackle. We're doing exactly that.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, he's not answering the question because they haven't changed the policy.

Wildrose also first pointed out that our seniors in long-term care only get one bath a week. Convicted murderers are treated better than that. The government has promised to change this. Apparently the new standard is supposed to be two times a week, but it's not enforced, Mr. Speaker. Can someone over there tell us how many seniors are actually getting their second bath or shower in a week? Has there been any progress?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of things with respect to progress.

You know, back to the previous question, one of the main issues that we need to tackle is the space. We need more supply. We need more places so that seniors can age with their spouses in the community that they helped build and with the families that they've raised. That's one of the reasons we're making such great investments in seniors' space, and I'd hope that the opposition would join us in helping move that forward.

With respect to the other issue, obviously, it's one that we want to tackle, and we'll tackle that with the space.

The Speaker: Hon. leader, third and final set of main questions.

Ms Smith: The question was on baths, Mr. Speaker, where you get washed with water.

Long-term and Continuing Care

Ms Smith: This government is long on talk but short on progress. The Premier and the Health minister promised 194 new continuing care spaces in the middle of the by-elections. The problem is that almost three-quarters of those spaces weren't actually new. It was all election posturing. The government has now promised that in three years there will be 6,400 more seniors' beds than there were in 2010. Now, I find this very hard to believe. Can the Premier tell us how he will achieve this, when his team so far has failed so miserably?

2:00

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the hon. member to consider the facts as opposed to the rhetoric surrounding this. I mean, there is a new Seniors minister.

In addition, in the time since I've become the Premier, we have put out a proposal call for 1,500 new continuing care beds under the ASLI program. In the time since I have become the Premier, we have invested an additional \$160 million in rural lodges. In the same time there have been investments in the rural lodges, to ensure that they're safe and meet fire code, of an additional \$70 million dollars. This government is acting on the priorities of seniors.

Ms Smith: Speaking of confusing rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Health minister have been using the terms "long-term care" nursing beds and "continuing care" beds interchangeably, but they must know that these terms have very different meanings under the law. Long-term care nursing beds require round-the-clock nursing care provided by LPNs and RNs; continuing care beds don't. Are they using these terms interchangeably to hide the fact that they know they won't make any progress on building long-term care spaces?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the Premier has us doing is planning for the future. As we allocate funding, and as we announce these beds, and as we invite proposals to

build these beds, all these beds and these units are being built to the B2 standards so that that room, that physical room, can be used as a long-term care room. [interjections] It's the care that will change over time depending on what the client needs. So we are in effect building long-term care beds, although Health will decide how the beds get funded and what health care actually gets delivered in that room. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, especially over here, do you find it so necessary to interject all the time? I thought we were setting a new example and a new tone. I see it happening on this side of the House, which is very refreshing – thank you – and I don't see it happening over there. If you want, I'll name names and I'll take further actions. [interjections]

Please. Please, Edmonton-Calder. If you persist, I'm going to invite you to do it outside. [interjection]

Hon. Member for Airdrie, any more out of you, and you'll be out too. [interjection] You're darn right you will.

Now, let's return this to some semblance of decorum like we have had in the past several days. We got lots of business done. Let's continue on.

Final supplemental, hon. leader.

Long-term and Continuing Care (continued)

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds to me like the minister needs to look up the definitions in the legislation. These issues matter because having long-term care nursing patients in acute-care hospitals costs our health system \$400 million a year. The Canadian Institute for Health Information has pointed out that Alberta has underinvested in long-term nursing care and that that has caused us to have the highest acute-care costs in Canada. Getting this right would be good for our seniors, for their families, and for our fiscal situation. Why isn't the Premier making any progress at all on this?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, our Premier took action immediately upon noticing and finding out that there were so many people in acute-care beds that should be in long-term care. We have put in place a program to move 740 people from acute care into long-term care. We're investing, as the minister said, \$180 million. We are committed to ensuring that people are in the right kind of care, and we're also ensuring that we meet all standards of care for everyone in long-term care with proper RN and LPN care. This government is committed to making sure our seniors are taken care of in the proper way.

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

Public Appointment Process

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new PC Premier isn't the first to appoint his buddies to plum patronage positions, but he could do the right thing and be the last if he answers the Liberal call for the establishment of an independent appointments commission. The Premier should be familiar with this concept as he was a cabinet minister when the Conservatives brought it in federally in 2006. To the Premier: will you do the right thing and support the creation of an independent appointments commission as you did before, or will you keep the power to yourself with your inner-circle PC cabinet?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a Public Service Commissioner that fulfills a very important role in terms of the quality of appointments that we have at the government.

But I would take issue with the intimation by my hon. friend about the quality of people. People that we have appointed to positions are absolute high-quality people. I refer, for example, to the government's senior representative in the Asia-Pacific, someone who has been a distinguished Canadian diplomat who has served this country with distinction and is now serving the people of Alberta, fulfilling the responsibility to govern our offices across the Asia-Pacific. Those are the kind of people that we're looking for, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Premier should listen better. Nobody talked about the quality of the people, just the quality of the appointment process.

As part of his plan to erase all traces of the sins and excesses of the previous PC administration, the Premier said that all future public appointments – that's after the three political ones he made – will be made based on merit. That's a nice sentiment. The PCs have a long history of making these types of promises publicly and then doing whatever they want in private. To the Premier: will you take real steps to prevent patronage by letting an independent commission manage the public appointments process in Alberta? Yes or no?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I say, we have a Public Service Commissioner, who is an excellent person, that fills that role with real dignity.

I would point out to the hon. member that I've also struck a Premier's advisory committee on the civil service. There are two very well-respected Albertans, Mr. Ian Brodie and Oryssia Lennie, who have agreed to co-chair that. Discussions are under way now about the other panel members, and they will be focused on the quality of our civil service, renewal of the civil service, and making sure that here in Alberta we have an absolute top-flight civil service serving Albertans.

Dr. Sherman: I guess the answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's former boss, Prime Minister Harper, said that a public appointments commission was an important step towards a more open, honest, and accountable government for Canadians. True to form, the Tories made nice speeches about accountability, but when it came time to keep their promises, they scrapped the whole thing. To the Premier. Actions speak louder than words. Do you still believe in the importance of an independent appointments commission? If so, will you adopt it as part of your much-delayed accountability act?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe in a high-quality public service. I believe in renewal of that service. It is for this reason that we have struck a Premier's advisory council on the civil service. Also, it's for this reason that Mr. Richard Dicerri was recruited to be the most senior civil servant in the province of Alberta, someone with more than five years' experience as a federal deputy minister, more than five years' experience as a deputy minister in other provinces, someone who has distinguished himself in the professionalism of the civil service that he has led. That's why he has been brought to bring leadership to our province.

Sexual Orientation and Human Rights

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, this morning the Member for Little Bow explained to CBC listeners that he'd crossed the floor to the PC caucus because they are more socially conservative than the

Wildrose. In the last provincial election the PC caucus ran on a platform of defending Alberta's LGBTQ community from the lake-of-fire Wildrosers. My question is to the Premier. For the sake of clarification for those Albertans concerned with protecting human rights, does this mean the Premier's new management is now pro lake of fire?

The Speaker: Does anyone care to try and answer?

Hon. ND leader, would you like to move on to your next question, please?

Ms Notley: All righty, then. I see the responsiveness commitment is going the way of the dodo bird, but anyway.

The Premier's record will only be defined by his actions. His cabinet selection is one such action. Now, the labour ministry deals with human rights in Alberta workplaces every day, but the Premier decided to appoint a minister who was recently forced to apologize for association with a group that describes sexual minority Albertans and their supporters as servants of Satan. To assure Albertans that this troubling record is not relevant to the Premier's willingness to defend LGBTQ rights, will he today commit to his support for Bill 202?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the most part those seem to be gratuitous attacks on the character of ministers of the Crown, which I don't think are warranted and befitting this Chamber. My record as somebody who has stood for the rights of gay and lesbian people in this country is very clear, and it is long standing. It is of 10 years' duration. It goes back many years, and I don't think I need to defend that in this Chamber.

2:10

Ms Notley: Albertans need to hear about your record here, not your record from a decade ago.

The Premier also had to decide who would be in charge of ensuring the education of Alberta's kids. In that case, he's appointed an Education minister who led a private college with a morality clause that discriminates against homosexuals and who was a leader within a church which equates bestiality with being in a same-sex relationship. So the welcoming home the Premier is providing to many extreme social Conservatives is troubling to many Albertans committed to protecting LGBTQ rights. Back again to the Premier: will you or will you not support Bill 202?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear that we do not believe in intolerance in our education system and that we are supportive of the gay and lesbian community. We support safe, dignified, and respectful educational settings.

Once again, I think that the personal attacks which the member has offered are unfortunate. I don't think they're befitting of this province and of this Chamber, certainly. The Minister of Education has a long and distinguished career as someone who has been committed to public education in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I stand by him.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We're going to move on to Question 6, so please curtail and/or avoid totally any preambles to your supplementals. Let's go with Calgary-Fish Creek.

Alberta Health Services Executive Compensation

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last year Alberta Health Services awarded over \$7 million in severances, and it's not just severances we have to worry about. Today we

learned that when Dr. Chris Eagle left his post as CEO in October 2013, he was retitled as a special adviser, at the same bloated salary of \$650,000. He didn't leave this position until last month, but according to health officials this morning, Dr. Eagle produced – and I'm going to quote – no deliverables that we could find his handprints on. To the minister: is the severance workarounds an appropriate use of health care dollars?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I need to reiterate that the new CEO of Alberta Health Services has been very clear that dealing with severances will be done in the normal course of business, done properly in a way that she feels is effective, following along the model that this government and our Premier have set. Severance will be something that is done in a way that is done in other organizations, in a way that's respectful to Alberta Health Services and the citizens of Alberta.

Mrs. Forsyth: Given that another former CEO of AHS, Mr. Duncan Campbell, was employed in that role for just one month before he was given a paid leave for the rest of the year, collecting a whopping \$1 million in pay and severance for his one month at the helm of AHS, does this minister think this is an appropriate use of taxpayers' dollars?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to reiterate that our new head of Alberta Health Services has put in place programs to ensure that Albertans get full value for all the people that work for us. We want to make sure that people are treated properly and effectively and Alberta citizens are taken care of the way they need to be taken care of.

Mrs. Forsyth: Will the minister commit today, along with the new CEO of Alberta Health Services, that there will be no more \$1 million severances, no more sabbaticals, and no more golden handshakes?

Mr. Mandel: Yes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Airdrie.

Violence against Aboriginal Women

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Violence has threatened the lives of our most vulnerable members of our communities: our mothers, our daughters, our aunts, our grandmothers, your wives. Alberta has the second-highest rate of self-reported spousal violence among the provinces, and aboriginal women are three times more likely to have acts of violence committed against them than other women. My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Why is this government not moving beyond reporting statistics so that we can help stop the violence and actually show we care for my sisters?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her distinguished career and for her advocacy on behalf of her people. I wear the moosehide swatch today because of my passion and my concern as well for these issues, which are long standing. We are focused on what we can do to improve the circumstances of aboriginal women. We are aware of the higher rates of poverty, the difficulties in terms of addiction and mental illness, the challenges of the lack of vocational opportunities, the lack of educational opportunities. These are matters which we can have

an influence on, and this government is focused on doing exactly that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so glad that everybody has a swatch on today. I know it smells, but it'll disappear in a while.

My first supplemental, then, is to the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Awareness is great, but what other supports are there for women to get themselves out of the cycle of violence and, of course, the cycle of poverty?

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud as well to stand against violence that is perpetrated towards aboriginal women today, and I thank the Member for Lesser Slave Lake for that question. Maskwacis, for example, has a violence unit that is dealing with families that have had violence in their families. Ka Goola' in the Dene Tha' First Nation is a domestic violence program that's happening. Second Chance for Young Moms is in Enoch Cree Nation, just very close to Edmonton. There are many programs. There will be more as we get this awareness going.

Thank you.

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's so great to see that the Aboriginal Relations department is doing a great job.

My second supplemental, then, is for the Minister of Human Services. What is your ministry doing to support aboriginal women who really, actually need help?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that immediate outreach is vital to women and children to keep them safe. The family violence information line is available any time, toll-free, province-wide in more than a 170 languages, including Blackfoot and Cree. There are also resources in Cree as well. We also have the safety net shelters in place that provide safe accommodations for women and children, and we have agreements in place with five First Nations on-reserve emergency shelters to serve off-reserve women and children.

Bethany Airdrie Care Centre Funding

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, while this government is running around pretending like the last five years just never happened, there are seniors across this province that are suffering and dying, in some cases, because of gross mismanagement. In Airdrie a series of draconian cuts to staffing for dementia and Alzheimer's patients at the Bethany care centre has resulted in many seniors not receiving regular baths and developing life-threatening bedsores because of it. This is third-world stuff, Premier. Third-world stuff. When are you going to restore the funding for staff back to the Bethany?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, Airdrie is a very important community. The facility itself needs to have some supports. We understand that there are some issues. We've asked Alberta Health Services to look into it, and we'll be able to report back in due time.

Mr. Anderson: Alberta seniors and their families, Mr. Speaker, don't want to hear any more empty rhetoric on this. We can't just sit idly by and watch seniors suffer and get sick and die prematurely because of some ridiculous new bureaucratic funding formula. I want a commitment, and I want it now. Are you going

to restore the funding that was cut to the Bethany in Airdrie for these vulnerable seniors? Yes or no?

Mr. Mandel: As I've said before, Mr. Speaker, we'll keep that under advisement and will get back to the hon. member.

Mr. Anderson: Minister, I have pictures of seniors with festering, open bedsores sitting on my desk right now. I don't want to, but with their families' permission I will table them in here. It is not pleasant to look at, and it is happening over and over and over again. They deserve an answer now, Mr. Speaker. Will you or will you not restore funding for the staffing cuts at Bethany, or are we going to have to do this the hard way?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I have great empathy and sympathy for the people that the hon. member has described. We believe that we'll do all we can to ensure that everyone in that facility will be taken care of properly. We've indicated that we will look into it and will under advisement find out the answer for him. We'll find out very quickly. We'll get back to the hon. member right away.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Country of Origin Labelling

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COOL is a requirement by which all fresh meat entering the U.S. must indicate its country of origin. This subjects our products to unfair competition within that market as regulatory costs increase. This barrier has cost our livestock producers, including those from my constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, hundreds of millions of dollars. Recently the WTO again ruled that COOL is inconsistent with U.S. trade obligations. To the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: despite this ruling, what can we expect from the U.S. which will serve to further stall an already . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

2:20

Mr. Olson: Thank you to the hon. member for the question, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important question for our producers. We are becoming frustrated. We have now won three times at the World Trade Organization, and we're now waiting for the American trade representative to say whether they're going to appeal. They have till the end of this week to do that. Based on past experience, we're expecting that they will appeal, and that'll take us into yet another round of the process before we get to the endgame, which would be retaliation.

The Speaker: First supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that for the third time, as you indicated, the World Trade Organization has sided with Canada on COOL and that things seem to be stalled, what are we doing as a province in order to move this forward?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, we've been very active on this for the last several years. We've made numerous trips to the United States. We've been working with people on the American side because there are interests there who are also very frustrated; in fact, some are suing the U.S. Department of Agriculture over these rules. So we've been very active, and we continue to do that advocacy. This is now costing Canadian beef and pork producers over a billion dollars a year, and as I said, they are becoming very

frustrated. Our representative in Washington, Rob Merrifield, is doing excellent advocacy work for us down there as well, and we're just going to continue with that.

The Speaker: Final supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the U.S. track record for complying with the World Trade Organization's rulings on this matter has been incredibly poor, what actions are we prepared to take in order to ensure that Alberta has a fair trade relationship?

Mr. Olson: Well, obviously, Mr. Speaker, this is an arrangement between countries, so Mexico and Canada are both working together on this. We're working very closely with our federal government, and we are nearing the point where we will be talking about retaliation. The Americans have been put on notice that this is what we will do. Some would say that they don't really believe that Canadians would do that, but we're telling them in no uncertain terms that we are encouraging our federal government to take retaliatory measures if this isn't resolved very soon.

Affordable Housing

Mr. Hehr: The more things change; the more things stay the same. I say this because despite this government's recognition that there was an affordable housing crisis in 2006, little has happened on the file. Homelessness is up in Edmonton, youth homelessness up 17 per cent. There are no places to rent. Fifty per cent of people in our shelters have full-time jobs. To the Minister of Seniors: why has there been so little progress on affordable housing? Please do not use the excuse that people keep moving here. They've been doing that since 1905.

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, there have been some good developments happen within the affordable housing file. I can tell you that since 2003 we've developed 17,000 units, at a cost of about 1 and a half billion dollars. Beyond that, we continue to work with all of the stakeholders and with the Ministry of Human Services on the homelessness file. One thing I would point out, which is in my mandate letter and should be encouraging to those that are interested and to all our municipalities, is that the Premier has set out as a priority for this province to develop a provincial housing strategy. That's one thing that is needed. We recognize that, and we're going to set forward on doing just that.

Mr. Hehr: Yet more people are homeless today than in 2006.

On March 19, 2007, the province released a report, completed by an all-party committee, titled Housing First, and 72 recommendations were included, like establishing a homeless and eviction prevention fund, increasing rent supplement programs, establishing an Alberta home ownership program, and ensuring adequate release of Crown land to municipalities. To the same minister: why has this government ignored the good work of the committee and failed to take reasonable measures to get a handle on this issue?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad he brought those up because some of those things have been done, and there has been progress made on that. In particular, you could take the Crown land release in Fort McMurray, and you could point to the announcement that we made here just this week, with the great leadership of the Premier and the Prime Minister, with respect to affordable housing and seniors' affordable housing in Fort McMurray in co-operation with CMHC and the Willow Square

project there. There have been great efforts made in this area. We recognize that we have more to do, but in co-operation with our stakeholders on the ground, with Human Services, and under the direction of the Premier we're going to do it.

Mr. Hehr: Other measures included implementing a principle of inclusionary zoning to allow a broader mix of Albertans to the live in a neighbourhood and working with municipalities to legalize secondary suites. Instead of implementing this report, the government sat on its hands and failed to act, and we're at the same place, if not worse, that we were at in 2006. Will this minister commit to implementing the 72 recommendations in the report so that we can finally get a handle on the affordable housing issues facing this province?

Mr. J. Johnson: Well, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that every Albertan has an opportunity to be in safe affordable housing right across the province, whether they're seniors or not. I'm happy to have another look at that report, but I can assure you that as part of the provincial housing strategy that we will be building under the mandate and the direction of the Premier, that will be one of the things that we'll look at along with many others. I think that coming forward in the new year, you'll see some plans to develop that provincial housing strategy, and I hope this member will support us in building that.

Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. There have been repeated calls from Alberta's indigenous leaders for the Premier to support a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. The inquiry would investigate the disproportionate number of indigenous women who are missing or murdered and provide recommendations to deal with the problem. To the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations: will you stand with Alberta's indigenous leaders and support a national inquiry?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are focused on what we can do here in Alberta to deal with the plight of aboriginal women, with the matters that we referred to earlier in this House: poverty, the lack of educational opportunity, the lack of vocational advancement, educational outcomes, and, as well, addiction issues. These are the matters that we can control within our province, that we can work on in a collaborative way along with First Nations. That should be our focus, and that is exactly what we are doing.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no reason you can't call for it, Mr. Premier.

Given that the RCMP has stated that the number of missing and murdered indigenous women is indicative of a much broader societal challenge and given that a national inquiry would place recommendations for solutions to this issue as well as allow indigenous communities to tell their stories and perhaps find closure in the losses of their loved ones, to the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations: how can you continue to say that there is no value in supporting indigenous communities across Canada in their call for an inquiry?

Mr. Prentice: No one has said any such thing, Mr. Speaker. Today represents an important step forward in terms of the Moosehide campaign, the swatch which I wear. We should all personally take

a stand against violence against aboriginal women in our society. This is a problem in Alberta that we need to address. That's why we are supporting this grassroots campaign, something that we are doing in conjunction with the friendship centres, which began the campaign. It's important that we all take stands individually and that men and women stand up against violence against aboriginal women.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wearing a swatch is not enough.

Given that this government has claimed – claimed – to be committed to working with indigenous groups and listening to their chiefs and leaders and given that all 48 of Alberta's chiefs supported a motion that calls for a national inquiry and that all 48 have asked the Premier to reconsider his position, do you really believe that you know better than Alberta's First Nations leaders on First Nations issues?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, no one would suggest that wearing a swatch is all that any one of us should do, and the hon. member should know, if he looks at my past history working on these issues over the course of a lifetime, that I have beliefs about what needs to be done. We will continue to work together. I am haunted always by a statistic that I learned when I was Canada's aboriginal affairs minister, and that is that an aboriginal woman, a First Nation woman who does not complete high school will make less than \$100,000 in her entire lifetime. That's what we need to address. It's poverty; it's educational advancement for aboriginal women.

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

Calgary Ring Road Completion

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest portion of the Calgary ring road is a very important piece of infrastructure for my constituents in Calgary-Shaw and remains top of mind for many. I understand that the next step towards the completion is finalizing the land transfer agreement with the Tsuu T'ina Nation. One of the questions I often receive about the land transfer, which is expected to take place early next year, is about the timing and why it is taking so long for that agreement to be put into place. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the delay?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working on the completion of the Calgary ring road. We signed a major agreement just over a year ago with the Tsuu T'ina Nation. We're working with the Tsuu T'ina Nation and the federal government to get the land transferred to the Alberta government. Until that happens, we can't begin building the road.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ministry has suggested it will start the RFQ and RFP process only after the land transfer agreement has been finalized. To the same minister: given that the majority of the design work is complete, can you explain why the RFQ, RFP process cannot begin now so that we do not lose the 2015 construction season?

Mr. Drysdale: Mr. Speaker, we continue to consult with the people, and we continue to move forward with the design and, you know, working with the people and consulting with them on our project there. The design is almost complete, but we can't put out the RFP or bid it till we own the land. That will happen in due course. Any time you're dealing with the federal government, there's a process to go through, and we have to do that.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spring the minister was adamant that the ring road would be completed using a P3 funding model and last week stated in this House, "We have yet to determine if the project will be delivered using a P3 model or through a more traditional tendering model. This will affect the overall cost." Well, it seems like quite a departure and a clear adoption of the Wildrose position on building infrastructure. So, Minister, what changed?

Mr. Drysdale: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I could say that we were ever adamant. We always look at procuring the project for the best value for taxpayers' money. All the rest of the ring roads have been completed using the P3 model, and we've shown tremendous savings for the taxpayers of Alberta in doing that, so of course we're going to look at that going forward. But to say at this point that that's exactly what we're going to do would be premature. We need to weigh and look at all options.

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

Mental Health Services for Postsecondary Students

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I think most members of the House know, 1 in 4 Canadians will experience a mental health issue in their lifetime. Many of these people are postsecondary students, including the 273,000 in our own province. My questions today are for the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education. I'd specifically like to ask the minister what his ministry is doing to ensure that we get to students early and that we get to them effectively when they present with mental health needs.

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

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. He has been a tremendous advocate for postsecondary students. I recognize the need to address post-secondary mental health. The Alberta government has provided \$13 million a year directly to the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge to expand mental health services and develop models of care that can be used on campuses across Alberta. Another \$2 million has been provided to the Alberta Students' Executive Council to focus on mental health. I will be working with the Minister of Health to develop a strategy to deal with these very real challenges across campus.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: given that we know it is very important to get to students or anyone with a mental health need early and that not all students will come forward to ask for help directly, what is the minister doing

specifically to ensure that students who do not ask for help get the help that they need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, I'm very concerned about mental health throughout Campus Alberta. Student leaders raised this issue with me whenever I have talked to them. Funding has been provided to the Alberta Students' Executive Council to let student associations run outreach activities that they know will work. Twelve student associations have run awareness campaigns. Several of them brought in guest speakers and offered peer support, and many organized activities to allow students to learn about the resources that are available. I'm pleased to say that these activities have reached 60,000 students across Campus Alberta.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the leadership that we've seen from postsecondary student leaders across the province and given that the government has in the last few years just begun to invest targeted dollars in supporting mental health services in postsecondary institutions, how can this House know that government will continue to stand by these students with more than just words?

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that I'm going to continue to stand by the students on this issue. I spent a substantial amount of time in postsecondary education, and I understand the stresses that can accompany a postsecondary education. Students should know that I will continue to support them on this issue going forward. Likewise, I know the Minister of Health is of the same mind and is making the same commitment. I will be working closely with my colleague to tackle mental health issues for students. In my last answer I mentioned that our investment levels are for a three-year commitment; we aren't walking away from anything.

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

Suffield Elk Herd

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent years the Suffield elk herd has grown exponentially. Fifteen years ago 200 elk were introduced to the Canadian Forces base by the province of Alberta. Now its population is at least 8,000, with a reproduction rate of 35 per cent per year. To the environment minister: what is the government doing to control this growing herd at a time when its impacts are being felt more and more by local ranchers, local residents, and travellers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a significant problem. It is our objective to ensure that we get that elk population to a number that's sustainable and manageable in that area. There are a number of complicating factors, including having to work with a federal agency there, the CFB Suffield. I've tasked my department to come back to me with a plan with some clear targets of what a manageable population is and over what period of time, with some key strategies working with stakeholders in the area to achieve that.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the main problem is getting this department to act. The hunting licence issue this year resulted in

fewer than 500 elk being harvested. Mathematically this is not the level of control that we need to responsibly protect and manage the Suffield elk herd. Again to the same minister: does the government have a real plan in place that will monitor the environmental impact of this herd and bring its size back to something that's manageable?

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, we have put some strategies in place that are attempting to make sure that the problem doesn't get any worse before we come up with a long-term solution. So we have increased the number of licences that hunters are allowed, and I believe the CFB Suffield has tried to work with hunters to allow access onto the base for hunting. We do know that we need to come up with a better long-term plan to make sure that we reduce the population to a number that is manageable.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The original target was 800. Well, we're way, way past that. I'm not sure that this government understands the damage an invasive elk herd can cause to a fragile ecosystem, landowners, and highway traffic. Again to the same minister: what is this government's strategy if disease appears and spreads to neighbouring cattle ranches, causing ecosystem contamination, loss of livestock, and loss of tens of millions of dollars of financial impact?

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, we clearly understand that this is a significant problem and one that we are taking action to deal with. Like I said, we have provided some short-term measures to ensure that the problem doesn't grow while we work with the stakeholders in the area, including property owners, farmers, ranchers, and the federal agency there, to come up with a plan that deals with this problem over the long term. I have taken action. I've asked my department to provide a strategy to us that will include clear timelines and clear targets of numbers and the strategies to achieve them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few years Alberta has been growing faster than any province in Canada. The benefits of that growth have been immense, but so have the challenges. This is particularly evident for our municipal partners, who are seeing greater use and wear on the roads, water systems, sewer networks, and recreational infrastructure. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: with over a hundred thousand new people coming into municipalities like Parkland county, the town of Stony Plain, and the village of Wabamun every year, what is the government doing to ensure that Alberta's infrastructure has accessible and sustainable funding to meet these new challenges?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. I know that as a former mayor of Stony Plain he understands these issues very well. The government of Alberta is very committed to supporting municipalities. Currently we support almost \$1 billion in MSI funding every year and in

addition to that \$350 million in the basic municipal transportation grant and \$40 million in the Alberta community partnership funding. In addition to that, we have just signed with the federal government the gas tax fund, which is \$2.7 billion over the next 10 years.

2:40

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Some Alberta municipalities have found it difficult to obtain MSI funding. What strings are attached that inhibit municipalities from accessing them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This funding, hon. member, has very open criteria and funds many different kinds of projects, from roads to water/waste-water to transit projects to recreation. We have this so that municipalities and their communities can pick the priorities that are important to them. But there are some reporting requirements, as with any granting of monies, because we want to also be accountable for taxpayers' dollars.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. Some of the smaller municipalities have expressed concern that operating dollars for their municipalities through MSI are being eliminated. What are you doing to address the concerns of smaller municipalities specifically?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you very much. That is a great question, Mr. Speaker. I have met with the members at both AUMA and AAMD and C, and smaller communities have raised this issue to me. I have told them we will look at the MSI operating to make sure that we're meeting their needs. It's also very important for them that they also want the Alberta community partnership. What I've told them is that we will review MSI operating and ACP to make sure that it works for our small communities and, indeed, all communities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Government Policies

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2012 Wildrose was elected to hold this out-of-touch government to account. Over 440,000 Albertans picked principled MLAs committed to ending waste, restoring real property rights, and stopping gross overpayment with golden severance packages to all public servants. We've made a heck of a start, but new PC management may only be cosmetic surgery, a smooth talker borrowing good ideas. Mr. Premier, is our work done? If Bill 1 is just the start of property rights protection, what's next: more silver-tongued oration or real restoration?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member sitting where he is should not be talking about cosmetic surgery. From my perspective, dealing very specifically with the issue of property rights, the appeal of the land assembly legislation will effectively ensure that we do not have situations of constructive expropriation and de

facto expropriation in this province, and that's why it's important that the hon. members support it.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we see no indication that government employees, both political as well as within organizations like AHS, are really going to be paid and severed at market rates, will the Premier tell us when a truly complete sunshine list will be released and when all pay packages will be brought in line with the private sector? Albertans deserve to know this.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take that one. The sunshine list is a list that came out last year. It releases all of the information on our public services, public servants. The hon. member raises a good issue. We'll continue to work on this issue and make sure that we release that information when it's available.

Mr. Bikman: We'll look forward to that.

Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans expect the government to end political interference in infrastructure decisions, like putting school portables where votes are sought rather than where locally elected boards say that they're more critical, and provide honest answers regarding tax increases, when can we expect to see substantive changes and get those answers?

Mr. Bhullar: We're building on the very critical infrastructure that's needed in this province, Mr. Speaker. Our Premier has made a commitment to it and will ensure that we build the schools, the road infrastructure, and the hospitals that are needed.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we continue on with private members' statements, could we have your unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Let's go to the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some individuals who have played very important roles in developing Bill 7, which I hope to introduce later today.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that representatives from all three existing organizations as well as the unification agency are here, and I'd ask that they rise and remain standing as I introduce them: John Carpenter, CEO of the unification agency; Rachel Miller, CEO of ICAA; Curtis Palichuk, FCA, co-chair of the unification agency; Darrell Jones, FCMA, co-chair of the unification agency; Barth Bradley, chair of ICAA; and Derrek Wong, chair of CMA Alberta. Many other members, who I unfortunately do not have the time to introduce by name, nonetheless have put a lot of time and effort into this process. I'm very pleased to introduce them to you today and have them here to witness the introduction of Bill 7, and I ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: Continuing with Members' Statements, let's go to Edmonton-South West, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Lung Disease Awareness

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada November is recognized as lung awareness month. Today patients living with lung disease, their supporters, representatives of the Lung Association, Alberta and Northwest Territories, and pulmonary specialists are here to raise awareness about the prevalence of lung disease in Alberta.

Approximately 600,000 Albertans are living with lung disease, and that number is continuing to grow. There are over 40 lung diseases, including asthma, COPD, lung cancer, TB, cystic fibrosis, and idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. These and numerous other diseases impact the lives of Albertans of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds and are fatal for 1 in 7. This number is continuing to grow as many respiratory diseases are tied to an aging population. In addition to the human costs, respiratory diseases exert a significant economic impact on the Canadian health care system as a whole.

Celebrating a remarkable 75 years, the Lung Association, Alberta and Northwest Territories' goal is to create a world free of lung disease. Today, along with Leigh Allard, president of the Lung Association, Alberta and Northwest Territories and also a constituent of mine, pulmonary specialists, and patient advocates suffering from lung disease are here at the Alberta Legislature to educate MLAs about lung disease and continue to build on the positive partnership the association has had with the government to date.

I'd like to welcome all members of the Lung Association's delegation to the Alberta Legislature and thank them for their tireless work and continued leadership on this important issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Official Opposition Achievements

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-one months ago over 440,000 Albertans asked Wildrose MLAs to battle for truth, justice, and the Alberta way. Among other things, they were fed up with an entrenched sense of entitlement, bloated pay and severance packages, erosion of property rights, projects coming in late and at multiples of cost estimates – our Premier didn't even pretend to care what they cost – bloated bureaucracy, over-regulation, red-tape, broken promises, politically motivated infrastructure, health care wait times.

Since then we've exposed the most corrupt, entitled, wasteful, out-of-touch, arrogant Premier in the history of the province. All Albertans were relieved, including 59 across the floor. You're welcome. Got the abused, misused air fleet sold. You're welcome. Advocated for property rights; Bill 1 is just a start. You're welcome. Removed a draconian clause in the MGA that threatened locally elected municipal leaders with \$10,000 fines and up to a year in jail. You're welcome. Prevented bills 45 and 46 from removing rights contained in legal contracts. You're welcome. Got a partial sunshine list passed that lets Albertans know who's earning over \$100,000 a year. You're welcome. Challenged the government to cut overhead expenses but maintain and improve resources to the front lines in health care and education, a work-

in-progress, we hope. You're welcome. Brought instances of red tape to the attention of this government, resulting in the Premier forming a group to help businesses navigate the halls of bureaucracy. You're welcome. Continue advocating for prioritized infrastructure lists so that everyone knows where their project is on it and when it's scheduled to start. This would make it harder for government to jump portable classrooms up the queue to help candidates get elected. Clearly, that battle isn't over; is it, Education minister? You're welcome.

As you can see, Albertans, there's still a lot left for us to do for you. Don't fool yourself into thinking it'll happen without pressure from us. We'll not abandon your cause or our principles.

The Speaker: Thank you. I'm sorry; the time has lapsed, hon. member.

2:50 Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Bill 7 Chartered Professional Accountants Act

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, Bill 7, being the Chartered Professional Accountants Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's an act to basically bring three organizations together: the CMAs, the CGAs, and the CAs. It's a bill that we brought forward in co-operation with and as a result of the request of the three organizations. The intent is to make sure that accountants in Alberta have labour mobility, that they are up to date with the national and world standards, and that we can continue to attract the best and the brightest not only from across Canada but from around the world to come here to live, work, and be accountants in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

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

Bill 8 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2014

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce first reading of Bill 8, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's justice system needs to be continually evolving, and it's imperative that our laws reflect those changes. Bill 8 proposes amendments to update several justice-related acts to ensure that the provincial legislation is clear and that it's consistent. These amendments will also help to make the province's justice system more efficient so that it can serve Albertans better.

The bill includes amendments to a very long list of acts, including the Court of Queen's Bench Act, the Estate Administration Act, the Family Law Act, the Limitations Act, the Notaries and Commissioners Act, the Oaths of Office Act, the Perpetuities Act, the Provincial Court Act, the Wills and Succession Act, and minor housekeeping changes to several other acts.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments in Bill 8 follow consultation with judiciary, Alberta's legal community, and members of the public, and these stakeholders support the changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 75 I move that Bill 8, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2014, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Are we on tablings? Then I have something to table. Absolutely. It is a letter from the Farmworkers Union of Alberta. They are identifying the lack of effort to deal with injuries and deaths in the agricultural industry. They've included a copy of a *Calgary Herald* editorial from November 13 dealing with the failure of the new Premier and his government to deal with this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is the Q1 Monitoring Measurement report 2014-15, prepared by data integration, measurement and reporting, on health measures.

The second one is Alberta Health Services' deferred maintenance project list, the maintenance projects originally planned to be implemented prior to 2013-14 that have not commenced.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others? Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, do you have a tabling?

Mr. Hehr: Yeah. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to augment my question from this afternoon, I'm tabling the Housing First report done by the all-party committee back in 2007. I think that if we had implemented the recommendations from that report, we'd be a long way to ending homelessness instead of the place where we are today. I'd encourage all members to take a look at that and get serious about ending this problem before it continues to exacerbate.

The Speaker: 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. Mandel, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors 2013-14 annual report; the College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta annual report 2014; the College of Alberta Psychologists annual report April 1, 2013, to March 31, 2014; the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta annual report 2014; the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta annual report 2013-14.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Kubinec, Minister of Culture and Tourism, pursuant to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act the Alberta Foundation for the Arts 2013-14 annual report; pursuant to the Historical Resources Act the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation 2013-14 annual report; pursuant to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation Act the Alberta Sport,

Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation annual report 2013-14; pursuant to the Wild Rose Foundation Act the Wild Rose Foundation annual report 2013-14.

The Speaker: Thank you.

There are no points of order, so let us move on.

Orders of the Day

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.

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mrs. Klimchuk]

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Human Services, did you wish to continue?

Then I'd be happy to recognize the hon. Premier.

Mr. Prentice: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to respond to the Speech from the Throne, which was delivered last week by the Honourable Donald Ethell, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta. I'd also like to thank my hon. colleagues on both sides of the Legislature for attending today as I deliver this which would be my maiden speech in this legislative Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, before getting into much detail, let me take a few moments to congratulate the Calgary Stampeders on their victory on Sunday in the CFL western final. It is, of course, always fraught with political risk for a Premier of this province to take sides in any battle of Alberta, especially one in which the stakes are so high, so in the interests of provincial unity, let me say that while I was in attendance in the stands at McMahon Stadium on Sunday, I'd like to reassure members that I was passionate about my neutrality and, in fact, took a great deal of ribbing for wearing my neutral Premier of Alberta jersey. Now that that's behind us, I hope that we can come together as a Legislative Assembly, as a House, and in a rare show of unanimity go on to support the Alberta team in the Grey Cup this coming weekend.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour not just for me but I think for every single one of us in this Chamber to be asked to represent our constituents in the Chamber. This is the first time I rise on behalf of the citizens of Calgary-Foothills, who put their faith and trust in me in the recent by-election to work on their behalf on the issues that matter to them in our free and democratic society. As I begin, I would like to thank them for their support and assure them that I will at all times work diligently on their behalf to advocate for their interests in this Chamber. I know there are several other hon. members in a similar circumstance, and none of us take those obligations lightly.

3:00

Let me say that as a newly elected Member of the Legislative Assembly and as Premier of the province I intend to uphold the standards that Albertans expect of us in the conduct of our legislative work. Albertans rightly expect that we conduct business

in this place in a respectful way, in a professional way, in a businesslike way. Certainly, debates in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, can be emotional. They can strike directly at political values and principles that each of us holds dearly, often in different ways, or matters which intersect with our personal beliefs or matters of conscience. But regardless of the levels of emotion or passion our debates can and should remain civil in this place. They should, I hope, reflect the mutual respect that we have as colleagues amongst ourselves.

Although we may slip from time to time, it will remain my goal as Premier to set the appropriate tone in this Assembly, which is the tone that our constituents asked for and deserve and which I think all of us, perhaps on all sides of the Chamber, who door-knocked in the recent by-elections would have heard loudly and clearly from Albertans in their own words.

Our debates in this place are passionate because each of us is guided by a set of principles that guide our decision-making. Throughout our history Alberta legislators and leaders have come to this Assembly to transform these principles into action, really, Mr. Speaker, to build a province which is second to none, literally the best place in the world, I would submit, to live, to work, and to raise a family. So, yes, we are fortunate.

For more than 100 years, Mr. Speaker, we have taken advantage of the natural resources that we possess as Albertans, that dot our landscape and rest beneath our soil, to create economic opportunity and prosperity. But I would in this speech make the point today that good fortune is never enough. The Alberta we live in and enjoy today is the result not just of being lucky but the result of ingenuity and our work ethic, our openness to trade, our embrace of sound economic policies as well as our embrace of sound fiscal policies, and, of course, our embrace of a society that values tolerance and diversity and which welcomes newcomers to this province and to this country.

It is for these things that Alberta is truly world-renowned. These are the traits that attract newcomers, that drive investment, and that elevate our quality of life in every corner of the province. In addition, Mr. Speaker, these are the same values that drive us to ensure, as we heard today in question period, the social advancement of First Nations and aboriginal people in this province, who were here long before others arrived, to ensure that they are equal and meaningful partners in the advancement of this province.

Mr. Speaker, these values and the people who live here that reflect them keep Alberta growing, and our challenge, really, in the circumstances that we are in today is to ensure that as we grow as a province, we preserve what we have built, and that we build upon it to construct a brighter future for those who will come after. I think all of us in this House are mindful of our obligations to our children and our grandchildren to leave this place better than we found it and to do work in this House which will accomplish that.

Mr. Speaker, in that respect, I do hope that the throne speech has provided a useful roadmap in terms of the best way forward. It reflects the commitments that I personally have made to the people of the province, initially over the course of this summer during the leadership campaign, during which time I campaigned the length and breadth of our province to become the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, again hearing it at the same time over the course of this fall in the by-elections, certainly the by-election in Calgary-Foothills but also in Calgary-West, in Edmonton-Whitemud, and in Calgary-Elbow.

Our government is a government that is focused on the people's priorities in this province, Mr. Speaker and colleagues: a focused commitment, firstly, to sound, conservative fiscal principles; secondly, to ending entitlements and restoring public trust in this

province; thirdly, to maximizing the value of our natural resources and at the same time respecting and advancing and protecting property rights in Alberta; in addition, establishing our province as an environmental leader; and, finally, turning to enhancing and protecting the quality of life that we enjoy in this place we call Alberta, whether we speak of health, whether we speak of education, whether we speak of the care of our senior citizens. These are the matters that are the people's priorities in this province. They have spoken clearly, singularly actually, over the course of this fall and, I would suggest, over the summer.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are our priorities. They are our priorities because they are the priorities of Albertans. We did not select them because they fit on a bumper sticker. Frankly, they do not. But these are the priorities that Albertans have spoken to us about, that reflect their passion for this province and where we're going. Albertans have high expectations of their government. I think that is very clear and rightly so.

Firstly, dealing with our fiscal responsibilities, when it comes to the way government manages money, Albertans have told not just us but generations of politicians, generations of men and women who have been privileged to serve in this Chamber, that they have very high expectations. They expect us, frankly, to understand that every dollar that comes into the hands of the government of Alberta comes from their pockets, directly or indirectly, and every dollar that we borrow will need to be paid back, either by them, by their children, or by their grandchildren. There is probably no other jurisdiction in North America which is more mindful of those responsibilities and more articulate about them and more passionate about them than the people of our province.

So our duty is to spend those dollars wisely on the things that matter to the citizens of our province: roads; bridges; schools; senior citizens' facilities; hospitals; planning for emergencies; supporting our first responders; serving our children, our seniors, and our aboriginal population, Mr. Speaker. These are the front lines, the bread and butter of government, where Albertans expect to see results and where they expect progress from this government in the days ahead. Our government will deliver on the people's priorities over the course of the coming months and years.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to emphasize that none of that means that money is unlimited. As was noted in the Speech from the Throne, our province was built on sound, conservative fiscal principles, and the government will carry on with that tradition, demonstrating fiscal prudence and caution in the management of Alberta's public finances.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important today. Let me discuss a little bit about what that means in today's context. Last week – this has attracted some attention and has been mentioned in this House – Moody's delivered an authoritative message about the state of Alberta's finances. They concluded that despite recent drops in world energy prices and even if we face depressed prices for as much as a year to come, our province is strong enough to weather this storm and manage to maintain our sterling, triple-A credit rating, and we will. That is something that we are proud of and that every Albertan should be proud of.

There is no jurisdiction in North America that is in as strong a fiscal position as the province of Alberta. There is arguably no jurisdiction in North America which is in a net asset position in the manner in which the province of Alberta is. This is something that people in Alberta value and respect, and it is something that they do not take for granted and which they do not want their government to ever take for granted. Any government that takes this for granted, Mr. Speaker, will not long be the government of this province.

3:10

The challenges of oil prices that are hovering in the mid-70 dollar per barrel range are very real, and they cannot be ignored. Earlier in question period the Minister of Finance passed me a note reflecting that oil prices today, the WTI price, was, in fact, lower than \$75 per barrel. So there will be effects on our provincial revenues in the form of reduced royalties. These are very significant impacts. The resource industry, despite its entrepreneurial spirit, despite its fiscal strength, its financial strength and resilience, will also be forced to adjust, and this will have a bearing on investment decisions that are made in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I make the point – and I've said it repeatedly before – that this is distinctly not business as usual. For this government that means it cannot be business as usual, and it comes to how we will carry out our fiscal planning. Tomorrow my colleague the hon. Minister of Finance will provide Albertans with an update on our second-quarter financial results, and it will be a thorough update, a transparent update on exactly where we are as a province. They will show that we remain on track for a surplus this fiscal year even in the face of falling oil prices this quarter.

As we enter the next fiscal year, we must, however, recognize that it will be incumbent upon us to continue to safeguard our hard-earned financial strength, and I will let the Minister of Finance deal more specifically with what he's going to cover tomorrow. But if we are going to be fiscally prudent as we move forward in a low-price environment, we must rethink our assumptions and plan with more modest, more conservative revenue forecasts in our provincial budget, Mr. Speaker. This is the only safe way forward.

Lower revenues, of course, will mean that our spending must be restrained to ensure continued operating surpluses, but restraint will not come, Mr. Speaker, at the expense of results, so we must redouble our efforts to ensure services are delivered efficiently and that they are delivered effectively and that we are a province that is characterized by innovation in the delivery of government services. Albertans rely on those services, and we owe it to them to meet the standards that they expect.

We owe it to Albertans to meet the standards that they have set for themselves managing their own family finances, managing their own business finances, growing our savings, paying down debt, and setting aside money for emergencies, which will inevitably arise. This is the manner in which Albertans conduct themselves. That is why we are such an entrepreneurial province, that leads North America in terms of economic growth and that leads, frankly, the world in terms of many of the things that we do in this province and excel at. But we must be fiscally responsible if we're going to continue to preserve our capacity to be innovative and to be world leading, Mr. Speaker. We'll do this in a way that is clear and transparent and easy for Albertans to understand.

Accountability is, of course, the second element of the throne speech. Mr. Speaker, when governments and politics are at their best, when citizens are engaged, when debates are lively and meaningful, it's when those that we elect to positions of trust and people that we represent conduct themselves in an accountable manner. We refer to one another in this Chamber as hon. members. We do that for a reason, a very clear reason that has tradition in our democracy. We do it because our very democracy depends on the will of the people being faithfully carried out by those who are elected, working for their interests and only for their interests.

I have said before and I will say in this Chamber that to engage in public service is to be a servant of the people of Alberta. That is

what it means, and that must be the responsibility that each of us carries with us into office. We are assumed to be honourable, assumed to be committed to upholding the trust our constituents have placed in us. Serious harm can be done to our democratic institutions when that trust is seen to be violated. I can tell the House that under this government and as Premier the trust of the public is paramount, and I will endeavour at all times to uphold those responsibilities and show Albertans that when they look to their Premier, they will see the kind of conduct that they expect, which displays accountability and shows the values of public service, Mr. Speaker.

This, Mr. Speaker, is one of the reasons that I made a commitment and our government has made a commitment to bring forward sensible accountability legislation early in this session of the Assembly.

The bill is now on the notice paper, and it will be introduced over the next several days. In it we will take several concrete steps to rebuild public trust in government and in those who are serving within it. These will not be mere guidelines; these will be the law of the land. We will strengthen the rules regarding lobbying and conflict of interest. We will restrain severance provisions for political staff. We will ensure that government contracts are awarded on a more open, a more competitive, and a more transparent basis. Mr. Speaker, legislation like this is important, not only to strengthen the rules but also to send a signal to those who have elected us that we are here always on their behalf, reflecting their values, working in their best interests, and meeting the standards that they expect from us each and every day.

Dealing with our resources, Mr. Speaker, as we move forward upon a rebuilt foundation of trust, this Assembly and this government have a great deal of other important work to do, particularly as we look to our economic future. Albertans are looking to the government to continue to do what government is responsible for, not to be in business but to create the conditions necessary for good, high-paying jobs across all sectors of our economy.

Alberta has stepped, I would submit, comfortably into the role of being not only a driver of national economic growth but also an international player, a province that has international aspirations in terms of our connection to the global economy, bringing our world-class goods and world-class services – our energy, our forest products, our agricultural products – to countries in every corner of the globe. We are a free-trading country, and no province displays that value more clearly and credibly than the province of Alberta. But our leadership position in that respect is not a given, especially when forces outside of our border threaten to stifle our continued growth and diversification of markets for our products.

So, Mr. Speaker, working to maintain our position of national and international economic leadership will be a hallmark of this government in the days ahead. We will take to heart the entrepreneurial spirit and the creativity of Albertans and apply those ideals to our work in expanding access to markets for all of Alberta's products, in the resource industry and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I will personally be doing everything that I can to ensure that Alberta's voice is heard amongst those who, at least in part, hold the keys to unlocking markets where products must be allowed to flow more freely. We are, as I have cautioned people from time to time, the largest producer of energy in the world that is landlocked, so our future, inextricably connected to international markets, involves pipelines. It involves other jurisdictions with whom we must partner. So, for instance, next week I will meet with New Jersey Governor Chris Christie as he pays a visit to our country and to our province. Governor

Christie is an ally in our battle for Canadian access to more global markets, with a public position in favour of greater pipeline growth across North America, in particular the Keystone XL pipeline.

I believe we must always engage with our allies and form united fronts in favour of projects such as the Keystone project that make economic sense, that make environmental sense, and which are good for Alberta, good for Canada, and indeed good for the entire continent. But it's equally important, I would say, Mr. Speaker, to engage with those who may for their own reasons act as road-blocks to our ambition. So government ministers, senior public officials, and myself will continue to press our case for market access with our counterparts south of the border, including state governments, the U.S. Congress, and the White House. We are ably assisted by Mr. Merrifield, who is working with us as our envoy in Washington.

As a Premier I've also spoken to members of the U.S. House of Representatives. I've spoken with members of the U.S. Senate to advocate for our energy industry. I will be making my first trip to Washington as Premier in the new year, and there I will meet with legislators from all parties to build further momentum. It is important that we embrace bipartisan support in the United States when it comes to the Keystone pipeline and other initiatives, Mr. Speaker, so we will be respectful of the U.S. democratic system, and we will work on a bipartisan basis with players in the U.S. political system.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, while our efforts and the headlines also tend to focus on the challenges of market access for our energy products, Alberta must also continue to be a leader in agriculture, in agrifood, and in the export of our protein and other products. Our government recognizes the invaluable contribution that agriculture makes to our economy and to the Alberta way of life. Our farmers and our ranchers, through good times and bad, have been the economic and the cultural bedrock of Alberta's rural communities since long before the discovery of oil in the Turner Valley field. They can count on this government to stand by them because agriculture and our rural communities will continue under this government to be a bedrock foundation of Alberta.

We will invest in smart-focus programs that help bring innovation to agriculture, and in the rural areas, where agriculture is the economic lifeblood, we will invest in the transportation infrastructure required to keep people and products moving. This is why, in addition, Mr. Speaker, recently, together with the Premier of Saskatchewan and the Premier of British Columbia, we, through the New West Partnership, agreed to advance the interests of building transportation infrastructure in partnership with the federal government that will allow us to get our agricultural products from the farm gate through into the Asia Pacific basin to the markets that want what we produce.

Here at home this will include not only the construction of new infrastructure but also working to eliminate the maintenance backlog, which concerns me. It fits, I think, with the fiscal discipline of which we speak, the importance of maintaining the assets that you have so that you maximize their economic life, Mr. Speaker. This applies to the transportation infrastructure that we have in this province and the need to make investments to maintain these assets so that they are of long duration. Our transportation infrastructure investments will also extend to our largest cities, Edmonton and Calgary, and to our smaller urban communities as well. As Alberta grows, our commitment remains steadfast to work with our municipal partners to build better, more efficient public infrastructure and transportation, which includes public transit.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn this House's attention to another subject which I know is fundamental to members of this Chamber and their constituents and which has been an important part of my career in terms of work that I've done, and that is the subject of property rights. In the Speech from the Throne this government recognized that the foundation of a thriving free-market economy must be the recognition and protection of private property rights, and that is why the protection of private properties is enshrined in our Alberta Bill of Rights, which it is not in every province. So we immediately followed through with a piece of legislation that takes an important first step – and it is a first step – the first step in rebuilding trust between the government and property owners in Alberta.

As we move forward, we will be respectful as a province of the letter and the spirit of the laws protecting property in this province, including the Alberta Bill of Rights. We will be respectful and will work together with the Property Rights Advocate, and I look forward to hearing back from the legislative committee on his specific recommendations as to the changes that are needed to the Expropriation Act and the Surface Rights Act, which are, in fact, Mr. Speaker, from a legal point of view, the engine by which property rights are protected in this province.

I know that this is a different approach than the Official Opposition advocates. They have put forward a property rights motion that would amend the federal Constitution, taking this critical responsibility out of the hands of Alberta and handing it over to federal jurisdiction. Now, Mr. Speaker, we agree on many things with the current federal government – perhaps we don't agree on everything, but we agree on many things – but that does not mean that we should abdicate our duty to protect property rights here in Alberta, because federal governments in the future may not be so friendly to this province.

A generation ago in this very Chamber in which we sit – I was a young man at the time, but I do remember the debate – Peter Lougheed fought against putting property rights in the Constitution in the 1980s. Pierre Trudeau's philosophy was that property rights should be the purview only of Ottawa and the courts, and the Premier at that time fought against this. Mr. Speaker, this will not be a government that sets back the cause of property rights in our province by over 30 years. Mr. Lougheed was right then, and he would be right today. So we will do the right thing in Alberta. We will be vigilant in protecting property rights. That is why we have repealed the land assembly act. It is why we will be vigilant in terms of protecting landowners from constructive and de facto expropriations.

Let me come to the subject of the environment, because Peter Lougheed was also thinking about the future when he introduced at that time some of the most advanced environmental legislation on behalf of Albertans. It's incumbent upon us as a government to, I think, adopt the same forward-looking approach in terms of all of the matters within our responsibility, and nowhere is this more critical, Mr. Speaker, I would submit, than in the work we do to ensure a clean, safe environment for our children and our grandchildren. We are all conservationists in this province. We all care about the heritage that we have inherited. We all care about the condition in which we leave it to our children and our grandchildren. I have never met a farmer or a rancher in this province that is not fundamentally conservation minded and passionate about this very topic.

The steps that we take now on behalf of Albertans to ensure clean air, clean water, and protection of our landscape will have a profound effect on future generations in this province. We owe it

to these future generations, the people that Teddy Roosevelt once called the citizens unborn, to pass on our pristine natural heritage.

Make no mistake, I would say, Mr. Speaker; the eyes of the world are also upon us because for Alberta, as we emerge as a wealthy jurisdiction that is producing in excess of 3 million barrels of oil per day, there is an expectation that we will be an energy leader and that we will be an environmental leader as well. So as we develop our energy sector, seek expanded markets, we must have unmistakable resolve to do our best in terms of protecting the environment and being a constructive partner in terms of the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is, of course, entirely fair to ask why we as a province have received scant credit for the excellent work which has been done to this point. Alberta has shown extraordinary environmental leadership in so many ways. This was the first jurisdiction in North America to regulate industrial greenhouse gas emissions and amongst the first to put a price on carbon, and while there are critics who would question whether the price of carbon is adequate or not, Mr. Speaker, the real test is that other jurisdictions, including the province of British Columbia, with their most recent framework for LNG, as well as the province of Saskatchewan, have adopted what is, substantially, the Alberta model in terms of the best way forward for those jurisdictions. What we are doing in Alberta has also attracted attention internationally in terms of the model that we've set for regulating emissions of industrial carbon.

The Speech from the Throne reminded us – and I look forward to reminding our potential customers of this as well – that we have been a leader, and when it comes to subjects like carbon capture and storage, the citizens of Alberta, the taxpayers of this province, have invested more in the science of carbon capture and storage than anyone on the planet, Mr. Speaker. There are initiatives such as COSIA, where there is significant progress being made in our province, where industrial players have come together, set aside their intellectual property rights, and fought to advance environmental causes.

3:30

True leadership builds on historical success, aims higher, and challenges others to do the same. As it was pledged in the Speech from the Throne, in the weeks ahead this government will bring forward a new climate change framework that will build on our past successes and show the way forward in the future. It will in particular work towards partnerships: partnerships within Canada, continentally, and internationally. Within it all stakeholders – industry, aboriginal and environmental groups, and others – will have a role to play in demonstrating that Alberta is serious about being in the environment business and that we are here to stay, Mr. Speaker.

A strong, growing economy generating good, high-paying jobs; a clean, healthy environment; sustainable public finances: together these form the basis of a high quality of life for our citizens. Mr. Speaker, to Albertans' immense credit as a rule we don't define our quality of life as a measure of what government does for us. That is not the Alberta way, it has never been the Alberta way, and I hope that it will never be the way that we define ourselves as Albertans. It is not what we take from government; it is, rather, a shared value as Albertans that leads us to not look to government first for the solutions to our challenges.

Self-reliance coupled with support from family, from friends, from our communities, and from our faith communities has throughout our history been our touchstone. It is what has made us strong as a province. Meanwhile our success as a province has drawn newcomers from across Canada and around the globe who

have been welcomed here with that same spirit, that same spirit of innovation, that same spirit that has drawn people here from all over the world.

But as Albertans have grown, so, too, have the needs that we must appropriately meet as a government. So our province has built a world-class education system. I don't think that that is seriously in dispute. We've established a publicly funded health care system that looks out for everyone in need of care regardless of their individual means. We ensure that the seniors, our parents and our grandparents who have helped build this province, receive the services they need as they age so that they are able to do so with dignity. We've helped put young people to work with skills training, matching people with jobs and jobs with people. All of this is the important job of government.

It is important that we focus the range and quality of social services on offer to Albertans, and the needs have never been greater. The needs of our society as our province heads toward 5 million people have never been more demanding. Pressures on the system remain. Our government has committed to address those pressures with smart planning and efficient and effective spending. But let it be said, Mr. Speaker, that no other jurisdiction in North America is facing the growth pressures that we are in this province at this point in time, illustrated perhaps most clearly by the fact that across Alberta there are over 230 school projects in various stages of design, preparation for construction, construction, and commissioning.

We do this because it is necessary that we do this. We do this because we need to open in excess of 78,000 new spaces for students because the children are here, Mr. Speaker, and they need schools. We make these investments where they are acutely needed, with an eye on the results that we are expected to deliver. We will work directly with those on the front lines of service delivery to ensure that the systems that are in place to do their jobs are working as well as they possibly can and reaching every person who needs them.

In our Alberta, Mr. Speaker, there are no second-class citizens. Whether you are urban or rural, our children, our seniors, First Nation and Métis, those on low income, and those who are homeless, all aspire to receive quality services from the province of Alberta.

While we improve our systems, we will also increase capacity in our services, working closely with our municipal partners to build more schools, to build more continuing care spaces, to create more spaces for senior citizen housing needs, to improve the condition of the existing stock of senior citizen housing that we need. At all times we will treat every dollar we spend or contemplate spending as a matter of trust between the government and the people who we serve and the taxpayers who provide those dollars to us.

As I conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker, Albertans do have high standards. They have high standards. They want to stand tall at home. They want to stand tall abroad, proud of what we've accomplished and hopeful about what is yet to come for our province. Albertans have a right to feel let down when we fall short of those standards.

Mr. Speaker, I'm incredibly optimistic about the future. Like so many Albertans, I've lived through the difficult times in this province, but I've also had the good fortune to see Alberta at its finest. I've seen our province put its immense talents on display and stack up with the best in the world. Economically, socially, culturally, environmentally: I've seen our province everywhere it goes as a leader, aspiring to be a leader.

We have so much to be proud of and so much more that we can achieve working together. Our government understands the role

that it can play in those achievements. We will be there to demonstrate accountability to Albertans when they demand it, and we will be there to support Albertans when they need it and to sing their praises across the country and around the world, indeed, as we often do, because we deserve it in many respects.

Mr. Speaker, this government and this Premier are getting to work. This is Alberta under new management. Thank you. [some applause]

I now move to adjourn the debate. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Premier, I believe I heard you move to adjourn debate. Did I hear that correctly?

Mr. Prentice: There was a bit of a clamour at the end, Mr. Speaker, for which I apologize. I now move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: I couldn't tell – the applause started so quickly – but thank you for clarifying that.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, under 29(2)(a) are we allowed to ask questions?

The Speaker: The motion is to adjourn debate, and I just clarified that with the Premier. My understanding is that the motion should now be voted on, hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Could we then come back to 29(2)(a)?

The Speaker: The Premier has 90 minutes within which to speak. He used about 47 or so. So he may choose to come back and speak, and then you'd be entitled to 29(2)(a) at that point.

Mr. Mason: Oh, at that point.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier has moved that we adjourn debate on the throne speech replies.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Alberta Property Rights Advocate

9. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that:
 1. The 2013 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for the purpose of conducting a review of the recommendations outlined in the report;
 2. The committee also review the 2012 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office;
 3. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
 4. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Legislative Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess we could take a bit of an Alberta break here.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this motion is debatable. Is there anyone who wishes to speak?

If not, would you like to close debate, hon. Government House Leader?

Mr. Denis: I think we're concluded.

The Speaker: The question has been called, then.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

3:40 **Government Bills and Orders**
 Second Reading
 Bill 3
 Personal Information Protection
 Amendment Act, 2014

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Quadri]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, you have 17 minutes left to speak. Do you wish to take up that opportunity?

If not, are there others?

Seeing no others, then, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

Bill 4
 Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Campbell]

The Speaker: We are going to resume with the hon. President of Treasury Board. Should he wish, he'd have 19 minutes left to speak.

If not, I'd like to recognize the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Fenske: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I have reasonable grounds to declare a conflict of interest, so I would like to ask to remove myself from any discussion or debate on this.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The member who has just spoken, from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, wishes to recuse herself from the debate, which, if you want to know more about, you'd be wise to visit the Conflicts of Interest Act, obligations of members, part 2.

Thank you. You are excused, hon. member.

Let us carry on, then. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak to Bill 4, the Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014. I do have the privilege of having a few horse breeders, some stables, and some training race tracks in my constituency. Growing up in an agricultural-based family, horses have been a huge part of our lives, chasing our cows around and, you know, trying to raise a few, sell a few, and make the odd buck.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's a great industry, the horse-racing industry. It employs a lot of people. It gives, you know, people who may not have had access to being around horses the opportunity to go and have some entertainment. Of course, with any type of gambling we want to make sure that people are gambling responsibly, and we don't like to see anybody have any gambling issues. That's always a concern.

Specifically with Bill 4, I have contacted many stakeholders, and they've had some questions. I have some questions for the hon. minister. I guess the first question I would like answered is: who brought about the changes to this bill? Why was this bill brought forward at this time to be changed? Was it brought forward by members of the horse-racing community, was it brought forward by the board, or was it specifically brought forward by the government? And, I guess, why did they want to see these changes?

I guess the biggest change that I see in this bill is that the government, the cabinet basically, will be appointing six members of the general public, and one of those will be the chair. Now, that brings some concern. Who are they going to appoint? We see with many of the bills that they've brought forward that cabinet gets to appoint board members. There have been quite a few issues with the appointing of board members. [interjection] I'm not sure what was going on there. I thought maybe the hon. Premier was coming to sit with the Wildrose. It's very nice to see you on this side, hon. Premier. I wasn't sure what was going on there. Back to the bill. You rattled me there for a minute.

Mr. Anderson: He can't sit here.

Mr. Hale: The Premier can sit where he wants. Let's get back to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Please continue, hon. member.

Mr. Hale: Stay on the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, you do have the floor.

Mr. Hale: Yes, thank you. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I apologize for the distraction.

Mr. Hale: So, it is a concern, how cabinet is going to appoint these members of the board and who is going to be on the board. I would be interested to see whom they appoint. I know that there is, you know, only one person from the level-A race track when previously there were two. There is one person from the B track, which mainly is quarter horse racing, which pretty much stays the same.

The Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association of Alberta now does not have a person at the board. I would like to know why they have been left off as a specific member of the board. It's important that a board like this encompasses all the members of the horse-racing family, especially them. I think they're important.

Basically, overall, I will be supporting the intent of the bill. I will be providing one amendment when we get to Committee of the Whole, which I think will enhance the bill and will allow the Alberta public and this Chamber to ensure that the new board, appointed by cabinet through orders in council and through their various workings, I guess, are held accountable. There are millions and millions of dollars of public money put into Horse Racing Alberta through the lottery. We need to ensure that these board members are acting and using that money accordingly. But at this time I look forward to the hon. minister's answers to some of my questions and continued debate.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a couple of concerns on Bill 4, the Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014, and section 7, where the Fiscal Management Act doesn't apply to Horse Racing Alberta. The corporation will be permitted to continue to run operation deficits. It also doesn't fall under the Auditor General.

The proposed changes to the governance structure of Horse Racing Alberta would allow the board to be more accountable. Not applying the Fiscal Management Act to HRA would allow the corporation to continue running operational deficits. In addition to other horse racing commissions in other provinces across Canada, Mr. Speaker, they are subject to audits either by the Auditor General or an independent auditor appointed by the cabinet.

The horse-racing industry has been subsidized big time, and those subsidies could be better spent on the K to 12 education system or provide support for school nutrition programs, Mr. Speaker. That is my concern.

3:50

Horse racing in British Columbia is governed by the Horse Racing Act, 1993. Under the legislation the British Columbia Racing Commission is composed of not fewer than three members that are appointed by the cabinet. Appointment of the members by the cabinet is also a concern in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority is responsible for licensing and regulating horse racing. In Manitoba, as well, the Horse Racing Commission Act stipulates that at least three members of the commission are appointed by the cabinet. The accounts of the commission are audited by the Auditor General or another auditor as appointed by the cabinet. So there should be some checks and balances in place here.

Those are the concerns I have with the bill, and I think they should be addressed.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has questions or comments for the member.

Seeing none, I'll look for the next speaker. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I want to indicate that the New Democratic Party does not support this bill. Some of the changes introduced were necessary in order to increase transparency. There still remain considerable issues with the act as it is proposed. We want to be clear, once again, of our continued opposition to the subsidization of the horse-racing industry in this province.

The changes made in this bill with regard to remuneration and payment of expenses to board members was necessary. We do agree that the ability of the board to determine their own rate of remuneration and payment of expenses needed to be changed; however, the proposed change isn't much better. It keeps the decisions regarding remuneration and payment of expenses behind closed doors, and this is not transparent, nor is it accountable to the people of Alberta. Not only is this secretive; I think it's out of touch with Albertans.

The bill does not end the subsidies given to the horse-racing industry. Now, industry insiders claim there are no subsidies for this industry. The Alberta Standardbred Horse Association states in a document about slot revenue and horse racing in Alberta: "Let's be very clear; horse racing in Alberta is not subsidized by the Provincial Government." Mr. Speaker, I was around at the time, just very early in my time here, when the Auditor General

found that the horse-racing industry was effectively receiving subsidies because they were getting considerably higher revenues on the slot machines and VLTs than were being allowed to private operators of, for example, hotels and so on. In order to make that okay, they had to change some legislation, change some rules, to allow that to occur, because it was a clear violation of the regulations around VLTs at the time.

The annual report shows that more than 50 per cent of revenue from slots goes to Horse Racing Alberta and not into the lottery fund. That's compared to 70 per cent of casino slot revenue and 85 per cent of VLT revenue which goes to the Alberta lottery fund. So we still have a situation where the horse-racing industry takes a bigger share of the revenues from VLTs than is allowed to other people who operate those machines. If a full 70 per cent of the revenue of the slots at racing tracks had gone to the Alberta lottery fund, it would have amounted to an increase of more than \$8 million in 2012 and more than seven and a half million dollars more in 2013. That's a pretty big subsidy, Mr. Speaker.

Now, not only is the industry benefiting from their ability to keep more of the revenue generated by slot machines than casinos do; they're also benefiting through the exception that allows them to have these slot machines in the first place. In 1996 the government allowed horse-racing tracks to have slot machines, going against previous government policy, which stated that casinos were the only place where slot machines were allowed. This program gave the same 15 per cent of revenue that they give to casino owners to the tracks. However, the rest of the profit, most of which normally goes to charity, in this industry is largely kept in the industry. This is by as much as 51.7 per cent. In 2008 \$35 million from slot revenue at Alberta's three tracks went to the horse-racing industry. In 2012 it was \$22 million, in 2013 it was \$21 million, and between 2001 and 2011 over \$260 million have gone to this industry through the sharing of slot revenue. So it's clear that the industry is indeed being subsidized.

Now, this is by a government that stands on the principle that the government shouldn't pick winners and losers, the government shouldn't be involved in business, the government should not be subsidizing one sector of the private economy over others. But notwithstanding this subsidy, Mr. Speaker, Horse Racing Alberta continues to struggle, consistently posting annual deficits. In '09 their deficit was almost three quarters of a million dollars, in 2012 their deficit was \$150,000, in 2013 their deficit was \$970,000, and in 2013 their cumulative deficit was over \$320,000 dollars. Despite these subsidies horse racing in Alberta continues to struggle, posting considerable deficits in the three years between 2009 and 2013. It is a struggling industry, and they are continuing to close tracks in the province.

We first raised concern about subsidies to this industry when this legislation was debated. When the Horse Racing Alberta Act was introduced in 2002 through Bill 16, the Racing Corporation Amendment Act, 2002, the MLA introducing it explained that it intended to assist the industry and Alberta's agricultural community in their efforts to revitalize this proud tradition. We raised questions about why this industry was being subsidized when the Klein government had built its reputation based on the respect of free-market principles, but I think that there are continuing questions about this. For example, every Alberta newspaper in the province has critiqued the government subsidies to this industry practically every year since it was passed, and it goes on. I don't think I need to read you the editorials and so on that have spoken out against this.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, since this policy was introduced, the world has gone through a major financial crisis. Governments, including this one, have instituted massive cuts, and in 2013 this very government instituted heavy cuts to postsecondary education, to PDD, and to seniors' care, and they have since broken their promise and cancelled plans for 131 of the promised 140 family care clinics. These cuts did not include an end to the subsidies to the horse-racing industry. So the government is clearly putting their friends raising thoroughbreds on those beautiful ranches with all those beautiful white wooden fences ahead of children, seniors, education, health care, and all of the things that are important to the vast majority of Albertans.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we're concerned about the amount of time the Assembly has spent discussing the size and composition of this board. In 2002 the Assembly debated the change of the size of the board from six to 12. Now it's being changed from 12 to 11. With the impending crisis regarding Alberta's crumbling hospitals, overflowing classrooms, and the terrible conditions in seniors' care, how much time do we have to spend debating this board while we fail to address the more serious issues affecting this province?

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that while there are some modifications to the board and how it's composed, to the status of the corporation as a provincial agency and so on and various, I guess, lesser issues, the basic fact of the matter is that we don't believe that the provincial government should be continuing its subsidization of this industry. It is in many respects a dying industry, and there are fewer and fewer tracks simply because other forms of entertainment and other forms of gaming have emerged, that have cut very much into its market share. We believe that we need to respect the choice of the people who make their entertainment choices, their gaming choices, if that's what they want to do, and not be picking winners and losers and using a skewed formula for allocation of gambling revenues in order to continue subsidization of this industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, are there other speakers?

Hon. minister, would you like to close debate?

Mr. Campbell: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few quick words. First of all, we now understand why the member from the fourth party will never win a seat in rural Alberta; he doesn't understand rural Alberta. Horse racing provides jobs in rural Alberta, and it's something that we have to do to continue to make sure that we create those opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I think, you know, that these are modest changes to the Horse Racing Alberta Act, but I think they're important changes. Number one, the proposed changes will bring into line more public representation on the board and are in line with Alberta's Public Agencies Governance Act. Our Premier has made it very clear that we'll have more transparency on our boards, and this will do that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make sure that people understand that public members will be selected from an open competition and screened for their relevant experience and expertise, and all board appointments, both public and industry nominated, will be made by order in council, and this will ensure consistency in the appointment process for all board members.

Mr. Speaker, also, as far as remuneration for board members, it's important to understand that that will be determined by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and there is a schedule out so that all of us in the House know what board members are paid for, whether it's under four hours, under eight hours, eight hours a day. Again, that's nothing new.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make it clear to this House that negotiations continue between the government of Alberta and Horse Racing Alberta for a renewed funding agreement. The current funding agreement expires on March 31, 2016, so I hope to bring forward a new agreement here sometime in the new year as to the agreement that we reached between Horse Racing Alberta and the government of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, again, these are part of the Premier's commitments to openness, transparency, and board accountability. The Premier has made it very clear that we will be putting people on boards based on their merit and their experience, and so far the Premier has lived up to his word. We will continue to move forward in a transparent manner.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the House to support the Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

Bill 5

Securities Amendment Act, 2014

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Campbell]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose will be supporting Bill 5. It is a continued effort to harmonize general derivatives provisions with the federal government. It includes incorporation of representatives, registered brokers, and advisers. It enhances enforcement provisions, which is, obviously, important given what we've just gone through in the last several years in that market. It also gives recognition of oversight of the Canadian Public Accountability Board as an auditor oversight organization, and there are other issues. We have no issues with this bill, and we'll be supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals will also be supporting Bill 5, Securities Amendment Act, 2014. It will permit the continued harmonization of regulation of derivatives across Canada in accordance with Alberta's ongoing commitment to harmonization, and it goes on to incorporation of individual representation, the Canadian Public Accountability Board, and enforcement and all that. Canada, unlike most countries, has a decentralized securities regulation regime, and as such, it must rely on its provincial governments to enact legislation supporting the ongoing reform of the Canadian regulatory system.

The changes proposed in Bill 5 are part of a national effort to harmonize securities rules and mirror those being made in many Canadian jurisdictions, Bill 5 and earlier regulatory changes that our caucus supported in the 2014 spring session. As a province and a country we need to be doing everything possible to protect investors and maintain the integrity of our capital markets. If the 2008 global financial crisis taught us anything, it is that to be complacent in the lack of regulatory vigilance could have

catastrophic effects, Mr. Speaker. No country or jurisdiction is immune to the effects of a market collapse. Therefore, it is important that we do our part to support the health and stability of the world financial system. Alberta Liberals acknowledge that the proposed changes are a necessity for Alberta to be able to honour its national and international commitments to improving securities regulation.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, we will be supporting the bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't realize the member from the NDP was trying to stand up.

The independent caucus will be supporting this bill also, and should the Premier ever come back on this side, he will need to bring his own chair. I have no chair for him.

Anyway, other than that, a lot has already been said about it. I don't need to repeat what has already been said.

Again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, thank you, hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre from the independent caucus.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) for that independent member?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand up and speak to Bill 5, the Securities Amendment Act, 2014. The Constitution of Canada provides that the regulation of securities is a provincial jurisdiction. Of course, that document was formulated in the mid-19th century, the later middle of the 19th century, so a few things have changed since then.

I don't think leaving securities regulation in the hands of 10 different provincial governments serves the role of investment in the economy, nor does it well serve the investor. I think we need to move towards a more modern system, and I know that this has been a problem for the government, not wanting to cede this constitutional jurisdiction to the federal government, that is anxious to take it over, but at the same time trying to find some way forward, where we can have a more unified national standard for the regulation of stock trading and so on.

The problem is that 10 different jurisdictions in the modern world is a rather parochial solution that's no longer really tenable. What we've said in the past is that we shouldn't have the federal government impose its securities regulation but that we should have a national regulator and that the provinces need to come together to negotiate that so that we have a national regulator. I know that there are some provinces that don't agree with that. I think the federal government is proceeding to move unilaterally, and I think this bill is perhaps a response to that, Mr. Speaker, but it is clear to us that in this particular case, even though the Constitution hasn't been amended, it's been superseded by technology and the fast-paced movement.

4:10

This particular Securities Amendment Act focuses on the incorporation of individual representatives, and it allows individual representatives of registered dealers and advisers to provide services through a professional corporation. It provides

for the recognition of the Canadian Public Accountability Board as auditor oversight. It clarifies enforcement rules and creates a mechanism for issuing automatic reciprocal enforcement orders in Alberta against securities violators. It allows the Alberta Securities Commission to set its own fees, as Ontario and B.C. already do.

Now, there's a general derivatives harmonization, which was the main focus of Bill 3 in the last session, which was another Securities Amendment Act. It made the language clear around derivatives but leaves the exemptions in the hands of the commission.

Mr. Speaker, currently many derivatives are traded over the counter in private exchanges, not in the public exchanges like the Toronto Stock Exchange or the New York Stock Exchange, that we're all familiar with. Until recently they were unrecorded and unregulated. In October 2012 the Alberta Securities Commission brought in regulations around over-the-counter derivative trades.

I think that securities governance is an area of provincial jurisdiction, as I mentioned. The federal government is pushing forward with a federal regulator. So far it will only be Ontario and B.C., and we've been reluctant to join because of, as I mentioned, the concerns over a loss of jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, I think the act is perhaps a good step in many respects to harmonize our laws with the rest of the provinces and to provide some increased protection for investors, but just like these Securities Act amendment bills get repetitive, it also gets repetitive for us to point out that we wouldn't need to waste valuable time and resources amending the Securities Act every few months if we would just join the other provinces in supporting a national regulator. Now, it would be preferable, from our point of view, if the provinces could get together and agree on a common approach, but I think that that seems to be very, very unlikely.

I have a few questions that I was interested in asking. I know that our federal counterparts in Ottawa, the federal New Democrats, are saying that the Harper Conservatives should not be moving ahead with a national securities regulator without the support of all the provinces. I think that this is something we need to take into account. We know that the Wildrose wants a stronger provincial regulator and have called the current protections: breeding for the wild, wild west of securities laws. Did you guys really say that? Okay. I think that they'd be reluctant to hand over the keys to the federal regulator.

We have called for a national as opposed to a federal government regulator in the past, as I mentioned. You know, I would like some answers to a question, perhaps in the committee stage, for the bill sponsor. We'd like to know why the government is willing to see Alberta left behind as other provinces are joining the call for a national regulator. What is the end result of that going to be for our province?

Mr. Speaker, I await further debate with respect to this bill. I look forward to some of the questions and possibly amendments in the committee stage and thank members for their kind attention.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, are there other speakers?

Hon. Minister and President of Treasury Board, do you wish to close debate?

Mr. Campbell: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

**Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

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

**Bill 1
Respecting Property Rights Act**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Yes, Mr. Chair. The Wildrose will be supporting the passage of this bill in order to repeal Bill 19, which was obviously not a very good act, as the Premier himself said. It is far overreaching with regard to property rights. That's something that we fought very hard in this Legislature for. I remember a lot of late nights in that regard as a member of the opposition defending the rights of property owners from that bill. We were told that we were fearmongering and overreaching and all that sort of stuff, and it turns out that their new leader agrees with us a hundred per cent on that. And that's good. That's obviously something that we can agree on.

I will take the Premier at his word although, I mean, I've got to be a little bit cynical – I wouldn't be doing my job if I wasn't – with regard to this being a first step. Given the record of this government over the last five years on property rights one is a little bit cynical that perhaps this is just window dressing. The fact is that Bill 19 was never actually proclaimed, never actually used, well, for several reasons. One of the biggest reasons, in my view, is that Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, already empowers the government to do essentially anything Bill 19 had in it.

You know, it's obviously a good overture, and our caucus will be supporting it, but we would like to see more. We would like to see more reforms to property rights legislation in this province. Obviously, the Premier's plan to look at what the Property Rights Advocate says and recommends is a good step as well. I've seen some of the recommendations of the advocate, and there are some good things in there for sure. So that's a good thing.

However, there's much more that needs to be done, particularly with regard to Bill 36. There are some issues with Bill 36. I still stand by the fact that I don't believe Bill 36 is a responsible piece of legislation. I believe we can do proper land planning, proper regional co-operation, and we can do that without the hammer of Bill 36. It's been done for years, and there's no reason why we can't do it without the help of a very, I think, harsh bill with regard to the tools that it employs and the lack of guarantees for fair, timely compensation for landowners who have their land designated in a certain zone that detracts from its value, et cetera.

So I think a lot of work needs to be done on Bill 36, and I would urge the Premier to have a review of Bill 36 both internally and perhaps, even better, a review by a standing committee to have some folks there see how we can improve Bill 36 to make it a bill that respects property rights. I don't feel that it does right now.

4:20

For example, section 11 in Bill 36 outlines the right of cabinet to rescind rights. Section 19 restricts the right to compensation for landowners. Section 13 withholds a landowner's right to the courts unless cabinet allows for it. Section 15 binds municipalities, regulators, and all Albertans to the bill. Section 15(3) withholds a landowner's right to make a claim against the government. Section 15(4) limits the role of the courts, and 17(4) stipulates that the bill trumps all other acts, including the Expropriation Act.

These are all troubling sections. They all need to be reviewed. They all go too far.

Also, I would encourage with regard to property rights going forward that we do not force communities. You know, this Premier again has talked a lot about respecting local autonomy. He talks about decentralizing health care. Of course, these are things the Wildrose has been talking about for six years, but that's what he is saying, and if he's sincere about that – and I certainly hope that he is – I think it's absolutely important that he respects the rights of communities to represent their constituents and grow their communities in the way they feel is best.

We have issues right now with the Calgary Regional Partnership and the Calgary metropolitan plan coming out of there, that are simmering underneath the surface. Airdrie in a lot of ways, frankly, is being extorted in saying that if they want water going forward, they need to absolutely sign on. It's not by this government. The provincial government isn't using that language of extortion and so forth, but some folks in the city are, and it is putting Airdrie in an extremely difficult position. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is aware of that, having talked with the mayor. But I think that it's something to really give pause, that when you force communities to do things and you give these plans binding legislative authority, you're really taking away from the autonomy of those communities.

What's happening, frankly, with regard to the CRP and the CMP and Airdrie right now is untoward and it's un-Albertan, and I support our council and our mayor a hundred per cent in any effort to secure our city's autonomy and it being able to grow. Our community is now 55,000 people. It's on its way to 100,000 in the next 10 to 15 years. We need to have autonomy to grow in the way that's best for our community members, and that may be slightly different from Calgary.

This goes to the argument that Bill 36, which has created the South Saskatchewan regional plan, is essentially and directly causing this hardship, because the folks that are pushing the CMP are, frankly, using the South Saskatchewan regional plan in Bill 36 and saying: "Look. If you don't sign on, we will use this as a hammer. We'll get it legislated, and you will have no other choice."

Not only can Bill 36 be strengthened to protect property rights, but it could be strengthened to protect the rights of local law-makers, locally elected officials. I hope that the provincial government, if they believe in local autonomy, believes in property rights and will take a long look to fix Bill 36. It's something I will always be pushing for.

There are other issues with property rights, of course. I have to respectfully disagree with the Premier on how constitutionally enshrining the amendment, that was produced by our Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, to the Constitution protecting property rights would somehow send authority for those property rights over to the federal government. That's actually legally incorrect. I don't know what advice or who is telling him that, but it's factually incorrect. That's not what it would do at all.

The Constitution is very clear. It sets out that property rights are the purview of the provincial government. It couldn't be clearer in our Constitution that that's the case. Simply making it a Charter right that landowners will not be deprived of their land unfairly without due compensation, timely compensation would in no way accede authority to the federal government from the provinces regarding property rights. It just wouldn't do it any more than, you know, the fact that the provincial government enforces criminal law somehow makes the provinces responsible for creating criminal law, which is clearly a federal power. Just because we have policing here and they do criminal law there – you can have the courts protect something and see them as a Charter right, and

that doesn't mean that you're ceding it to the federal government to look over.

We have many laws that guard rights and freedoms that are in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I mean, look at human rights commissions. There's an example. Those are all rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – well, most of them are – yet they're enforced practically on the ground here. That doesn't mean that, you know, the federal government is ceding power to the province or vice versa. It just means that it's a Charter right, that a province or the federal government cannot pass a law that would take away from a landowner's right to fair and timely compensation. That's all that it would do. So I'm not sure why the use of that rhetoric. It's just not accurate. I hope that there will be reconsideration.

Premier Lougheed didn't ask for that to be in the Charter, but if you talk with Preston Manning, who also had a lot of insight into how that process unfolded, he will tell you that it had nothing to do with ceding rights in that regard. It's nonsensical to claim, frankly, that passing property rights into the Charter would somehow be the province giving up those rights to legislate over property rights. It's just not true. Hopefully, we can in the future come back to that. I really do hope so.

There are other issues. Bill 36, really, is the big one. Bill 50, of course, has been rescinded, but it already did its damage. You know, we've just had the lines go up over the highway over Crossfield. I was delayed for about an hour and a half as they put them up because they had a helicopter bringing the big lines over with the big power lines. It was quite something.

Mr. Hale: Yeah. We have a beautiful landscape in and around Brooks.

Mr. Anderson: There you go. A big moonscape. It's fantastic.

Anyway, those power lines were totally unnecessary. We could have been promoting local natural gas production in and around Calgary to service the Calgary area, to service local communities without the use of those power lines. We've got buckets of natural gas when we need it, yet we decided to run massive, expensive power lines down from coal-producing plants in the north down to Calgary and southern Alberta. We did not need those lines, and we're now all paying for it. If you've looked at your utility bills lately, we're all paying for it, and it's a whole lot more than what was claimed at the beginning.

Now, I hope that if this Premier had been in charge and not Mr. Stelmach at the time, he would not have passed or produced such a draconian piece of legislation, such a wasteful piece of legislation. But, you know, I don't know. I hope that's the case. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt on that.

It just shows how important property rights are not just to rural landowners but that they affect urban communities as well and people from urban communities. People in Calgary have to pay for those power lines that Bill 50 was used to build. They have to pay for them. We all have to pay for them no matter where we are. It does affect us. It is not just a rural issue. It is an urban issue. Property rights do matter, you know, and it's sad what's happened over the last few years.

But if this is a first step by the Premier, as he says, towards getting that balance back to where it should be, then we welcome it, and we support it. But we hope that it is just a first small step and that there are many, many more steps with regard to Bill 36, with regard to constitutionally enshrining property rights in the Charter. I think that would be just fantastic if we could leave here

at the end of this term with these property rights properly enforced for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do not have any amendments for this bill.

The Chair: I recognize the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to this bill in Committee of the Whole. Of course, what this bill did not deal with was Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, which was the major bill that caused the vast majority of contention with rural landowners throughout the entire province.

4:30

There were three main issues with that bill. The first one was the idea of regional planning. That's where cabinet could pass regional plans that would supersede any local plans within a municipality. Of course, central planning hasn't worked in places like eastern Europe, and most people that I've talked to felt that we shouldn't be bringing that type of planning here to Alberta. Of course, the regional plans would deal with every single public and private use of every single piece of property throughout the province.

The second aspect was the idea of no compensation clauses in the bill. One example was when the lower Athabasca regional plan was passed, and there were a bunch of oil sands leases that were cancelled. There is no compensation mechanism for those companies that had their oil sands leases cancelled. Many question that if an oil sands company cannot obtain compensation when a regional plan extinguishes those rights, what chance does the average landowner, the average farmer have?

The third aspect is the lack of an appeal right to a court. What was placed in Bill 36 was the most all-encompassing privative clause that I've ever seen – essentially that's a clause that prevents an individual from seeking recourse in the courts – and this privative clause was widely discussed by constitutional experts across the province as exceptionally all-encompassing and essentially prohibiting any type of appeal right that someone otherwise would have had.

Of course, it's good that the government is repealing Bill 19, but it is important for there to be these types of amendments to actually repeal laws that have significantly affected landowners and property rights.

Of course, there was the opportunity to entrench property rights in our Constitution. My understanding is that under section 43 of the Constitution's amending formulas a motion passed by a simple majority in the Legislature would have then been conveyed to Parliament, and then thereby, if there was a simple majority vote in Parliament that wanted to entrench property rights, that would have been done, which would have entrenched property rights solely in the jurisdiction of Alberta. It's unfortunate that that was voted down because it would have been nice to see that equivalent motion debated and hopefully passed in Parliament.

We don't have any amendments on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity for speaking.

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

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair, and I will offer some amendments to Bill 1 later, but I would like to speak about a few points relative to this at the moment.

Now, the hon. Member for Airdrie talked about the opposition fighting Bill 19, and that was in 2009. My recollection is that at that time the hon. Member for Airdrie was still part of the government caucus – am I right? – because I know that it was the NDP that stood up and fought against this bill and defended the rights of property owners. We talked about the importance of basic principles, that needed to be protected, that this bill trampled on. They included a number of things. First of all, there has to be a pressing public need if you're going to take somebody's land away. Secondly, there has to be full and fair compensation. Thirdly, there has to be some sort of right of appeal. I think that those are the principles that we need to continue to operate by, and Bill 19 didn't do that.

I don't know if in the next little while we'll have a Wildrose Party standing up for rural property owners' rights, but if not, the NDP will do it. We'll continue to stand up to protect that. Now, it's not that we don't think there are sometimes good public reasons why the province or a municipality might need to acquire some land in order to do things, but it has to be done according to a set of principles.

Now, Airdrie has also talked about the effect of putting the protection of private property in the Constitution, and the Premier said: well, it would transfer the authority over this jurisdiction to the federal government. That's not what the province wants, that's not what Peter Lougheed wanted, and that's not been accepted by Airdrie, and I tend to agree with him. But what it does do is to transfer the jurisdiction to the courts, and it means then that any piece of legislation with respect to this that's introduced in the province of Alberta can be overridden by the courts because the protection is enshrined in the Constitution. So I think Airdrie has missed that point, and I think the Premier missed that point. The real point is whether or not you want to put that into the courts as a fundamental right.

Of course, we believe that it's an important right, but it needs to be carefully balanced with the public good and with the ability of various orders of government being able to proceed with important public projects. So finding the right balance, I think, is what we need to do. Needless to say, Mr. Chairman, we will support this.

There were some other bills, of course, that were very problematic, that were introduced at the time, and not just Bill 19.

I want to just mention that we think that while we're supporting the bill, it's clear that it's another example of PC broken promises. Throughout his leadership campaign the Premier committed himself and his party to addressing the limits on property rights that had been put in place by previous PC governments. He appealed to his background as a property rights lawyer, saying that he negotiated fair settlements with respect to people's property rights. He promised to restore the balance. He also highlighted that private ownership of land is a fundamental right.

I want to just talk a little bit about some of the other bills at the time. Now, Bill 36, the Land Stewardship Act, created seven regional plans that trumped other legislation and concentrated the power to do this in the hands of the cabinet, and that's why we were opposed to Bill 36. We still think that there's too much centralization of authority in terms of planning matters in the federal cabinet. Municipalities need to be able to make plans, and we can't tell them, you know, that they can't develop a plan and say that this type of land in this area will be used for a certain use and this land over here will be used for something else because it's important that we keep – for example, you don't want to have a chemical plant next to a residential area with schools, and so on. There is an important planning role that needs to be exercised, but it should be exercised not necessarily by the cabinet but by locally

elected and accountable municipalities. So that's a problem with Bill 36.

Now, Bill 50 was the third one in this troika of trampling of rights of property owners, and it was designed to put through these massive power lines that the province is building all over the place, which do nothing for the beautiful views along many of our roads and highways in the province right now. It allowed the cabinet to define essential transmission infrastructure, which cut out the Alberta Utilities Commission, and it cut out as well other organizations that were part of a process for project assessment decisions.

When this was introduced, we opposed the bill because it failed to protect consumers from the overbuilding of unnecessary transmission lines, the cost of which is going to be passed on to consumers. Now, we said a number of things about Bill 50: all utility projects should be subject to full public scrutiny and a full regulatory process, power customers must not be required to fund utility projects for for-profit companies, and the protection of consumers' interests was paramount. Since then, of course, we know that there have been big increases in power bills, and these costs are all going to be added to the bills of the consumers.

4:40

It's a very interesting thing, Bill 1, because I think it fits in very much with the government strategy that we're seeing unfold now, which is that the government is very much all about chasing Wildrose voters, and this was an issue that the Wildrose made considerable hay on.

I think that we need to make a number of steps to go further. I guess, for me, just removing Bill 19 is not enough. We need to be clear in a positive way what we're going to do with respect to the issue of the balance between the public requirement for land in order to build the province and to make sure that progress continues to happen on the one hand and the rights of landowners on the other.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat, and if there are no other speakers, then maybe you can come back to me.

The Chair: I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's also a great pleasure and honour to speak to Bill 1, Respecting Property Rights Act. In 2009 the Alberta Liberal caucus had rigorously opposed Bill 19, and we opposed bills 36 and 50, and we fought tooth and nail opposing those bills. Bill 1 is going to repeal the land assembly project act, which was never proclaimed. It came to the House in 2009. The Land Assembly Project Area Act, which never came into force, will be repealed with this bill.

Protecting property rights was in the Premier's leadership campaign all summer; however, the only legislative action within Bill 1 is to repeal the unproclaimed Land Assembly Project Area Act, Mr. Chair. When the Land Assembly Project Area Act was introduced and passed in the spring of 2009, it did so with much controversy from the property owners, and the Alberta Liberal caucus was fighting for the rights of the property owners at the time. The original bill aimed to designate corridors for infrastructure projects such as transportation and utility corridors, and the bill's key impact would have been placing unlimited and indefinite restrictions on landowners' rights on their property, with serious fines and potentially prison as penalties.

At the same time, however, the Liberal caucus had concerns surrounding another law concerning property rights, the Responsible Energy Development Act, which created the Alberta Energy Regulator, Mr. Chair. Although the Responsible Energy

Development Act is outside the scope of Bill 1, the Liberal caucus concerns could have been incorporated into the bill.

The Liberal caucus is also concerned about who is granted standing for the hearings on proposed oil, gas, and oil sands projects, Mr. Chair. Only those directly and adversely affected get to participate. This is specifically sections 32, 34, and 36. If the regulator determines that no one filing a statement of concern is directly and adversely affected, there's no hearing. This ignores the property rights of landowners who are indirectly and adversely affected such as landowners who live a distance away from the proposed project. When the proposed project is on public land such as the Cold Lake air weapons range, no one is able to intervene to look after the property rights of the public.

So this restriction also creates First Nations consultation issues, particularly if traditional land is at issue, Mr. Chair. The Premier said that he would address the Responsible Energy Development Act in terms of property rights and First Nations aspects, but no proposal has been released to date. Under the Statutes Repeal Act the Land Assembly Project Area Act would have been repealed in 2016. Starting in 2016, the Statutes Repeal Act will start a process to repeal any unclaimed legislation that has been expired for at least five years. In other words, if the government did nothing, the Land Assembly Project Area Act would have been repealed. So I think this seems like just window dressing, Mr. Chair. But, you know, we are still concerned in the Alberta Liberal caucus. We have a big concern regarding the outstanding property rights concern in Alberta. We will support this bill, you know, but holding our nose. The Alberta Liberal caucus position was against the Land Assembly Project Area Act, and this has not changed, Mr. Chair.

With those comments, I will take my seat. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to be brief here. I think it's important as the representative from Drumheller-Stettler that I, too, speak to the Respecting Property Rights Act because I think it's significant, particularly for this constituency, because the repealing of Bill 19 is reminiscent of a previous day in the Legislature here. I think it needs to be put on the record that Bill 19 was sponsored by the previous representative from Drumheller-Stettler, and I find it kind of interesting that the first act of this Legislature would be to repeal an unproclaimed piece of legislation that a previous member of a similar government brought forward.

It's a good start. I'm somewhat dismayed that possibly there should be more changes brought forward. The Premier had made great fanfare of this in his pre-election tours, and even in the presentation of this in the House it was made to be a great fanfare. To be something of only 10 words or less in the handout provided to us by the pages was somewhat disappointing. There are many pieces of legislation specifically relating to Bill 36 that would be far more significant than this, and possibly that will be demonstrated to us in the future. I look forward to that taking place.

The Chair: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have several amendments to Bill 1.

The Chair: If you'd just send it with the pages, hon. member, with the original . . .

Mr. Mason: Yes, I will.

The Chair: . . . and then you can speak to it.

We'll refer to this as amendment A1, hon. member. I think you can start speaking to it.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Well, I'll move that Bill 1, Respecting Property Rights Act, be amended in the preamble in the fifth recital by adding "as a preliminary measure," after "Land Assembly Project Area Act." This is because we feel that this is incomplete and that there are many more steps to go, but the bill doesn't anticipate that.

I have another amendment, which I'll move, which completes this.

The Chair: Hon. member, why don't we deal with this one? Then we'll go to the next one and deal with it.

4:50

Mr. Mason: Yeah. I just wanted to point out that there's a connection between this one and the next one. The two amendments are designed to point out that the following bills remain on the books: Bill 2, Responsible Energy Development Act; Bill 24, Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act; Bill 36, Alberta Land Stewardship Act; and Bill 50, Electric Statutes Amendment Act. We think that these things need to be dealt with as well. I think that that's one of the things that I wanted to mention. I think that we want to indicate that it doesn't go far enough, and the commitment by our party regarding land rights five years ago remains unaddressed. We're especially disappointed that the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, amended by a controversial Bill 50 in 2009, has not been addressed. By failing to address that bill, the government continues to prioritize the interests of industry, in this example electricity, over landowners and Alberta families.

We want to indicate by this amendment that there are further changes coming and that this bill, in and of itself, does not accomplish the things that are set out in its preamble. It is only a step towards accomplishing those things, particularly the first and second elements of the preamble: "is a fundamental element of Parliamentary democracy." I don't know how ownership of land is a fundamental element of democracy. It confuses democracy with rights, in my view. That's the first thing.

Secondly, "The Alberta Bill of Rights recognizes and declares the right of the individual to the enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law," and "The Government is committed to consulting with Albertans on legislation."

In my view, Mr. Chair, this is an incomplete bill, which does not satisfy the objectives set out in the preamble. Thank you.

The Chair: Speaking to amendment A1, any speakers?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Back to the main bill. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: I've got another one, Mr. Chair. On behalf of my colleague – well, I'll move it in just a second.

The Chair: This is amendment A2. Proceed, hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I will move that Bill 1, Respecting Property Rights Act, be amended in the preamble in the fifth recital by adding “part of” after “reaffirms.” So it would read: reaffirms part of the government’s commitment to respect individual property rights. I just think it makes more sense to admit that this does not completely do that, that it’s just a first step.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any questions or comments on the amendment?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We’re back to the main bill. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I have the last one here.

An Hon. Member: Aw.

Mr. Mason: It’s going quickly. Don’t worry.

The Chair: Hon. member, this will be amendment A3. Please proceed.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will move on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that Bill 1, Respecting Property Rights Act, be amended in the preamble by adding the following after the third recital: “Whereas the Government wants to begin to resolve any ambiguity about its position on property rights.” That would mean that the government wants to begin to resolve ambiguity, which is, I think, what they’ve created. They want to do that. They haven’t accomplished that yet. That’s, as far as I know, the purpose of this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Any speakers to amendment A3?

Seeing none, we’ll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: Back to the main bill.

An Hon. Member: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? So ordered.

Bill 3 Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2014

The Chair: Any questions or comments on the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Yeah. It’s an honour to rise and speak to Bill 3, the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2014. My understanding is that this piece of legislation merely codifies a directive that was issued by the Supreme Court of Canada. You know, this could have been an opportunity to do a more broad and comprehensive review of this legislation, but in light of the explicit ruling of the Supreme Court, this amendment just appears to comply with that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bill 3 is a remedy for a judicial review that ultimately resulted in the Personal Information Protection Act being declared unconstitutional and struck down. This bill is intended to make PIPA compliant with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and nothing else.

In practice this will make filming individuals crossing a picket line during a strike legal, regardless of individuals’ consent, along with its internal use and disclosure. According to the bill this will be “for the purpose of informing or persuading the public about a matter of significant public interest or importance relating to a labour relations dispute [with] the trade union.” Bill 3 appears to satisfy the Charter’s requirements regarding free expression during a legal strike.

Although the Alberta Information and Privacy Commissioner is satisfied with Bill 3, the union took PIPA to the Supreme Court, and the United Food and Commercial Workers local 401 is still concerned that the bill’s scope is too narrow, Mr. Chair. That’s the only concern there. I think it’s still a step in the right direction, but those concerns should have been addressed in the bill. We will be supporting the bill but with those concerns from the union.

Thank you very much.

5:00

The Chair: Are there others to speak to the bill?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: The question has been called.

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Bill 5 Securities Amendment Act, 2014

The Chair: Any questions?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Bill 4
Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014

The Chair: Hon. members, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my honour to rise again and talk on Bill 4, the Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014, in Committee of the Whole. As I stated in my second reading comments, I did have some questions and stated that I would have an amendment, so at this time I would like to propose and bring forward the amendment. I will discuss it after it has been handed out.

The Chair: Hon. members, we have an amendment, which will be amendment A1, to Bill 4. As that's being circulated, hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, you may speak to it.

Mr. Hale: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will read into the record my amendment. It states:

Mr. Hale to move that Bill 4, Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014, be amended in section 4, in the proposed section 7, by striking out “, the Fiscal Management Act and the Auditor General Act” and substituting “and the Fiscal Management Act.”

As I stated in my preliminary comments in second reading, there is a large portion of public funds that are put into Horse Racing Alberta. That was also reiterated by the hon. minister and his staff at the bill briefing. That was part of the reason why they wanted an appointed board to look after Horse Racing Alberta, because there were lots of public funds that were put into it. In their quest and our quest to hold the government to account and to be transparent and accountable to the people of Alberta, I feel that it's important to allow the Auditor General to have some authority to go in and see how the money is being spent and to hold the board, which is put in place through orders in council, to account on how they're spending our money.

It says under section 7:

Status as a Provincial agency

7 The Corporation is not a Provincial agency for the purposes of the Financial Administration Act, the Fiscal Management Act and the Auditor General Act.

To me, when I read that, it's saying that the corporation is not going to be looked at under the Auditor General. We may hear statements that the Auditor General still can look at it, but if this is law, then the Auditor General is not an agency under the Auditor General Act. I feel we need to take that statement out so that there is no confusion, there is no chance that the Auditor General has his hands tied and is not able to look into this Horse Racing Alberta.

The Auditor General does great work. We've seen it many times. He's shown ways that money is maybe not being spent right, is wrongly allocated, and he needs the opportunity in the full breadth of his work to be able to look into Horse Racing Alberta.

As I stated before, Horse Racing Alberta is great for the province of Alberta. It's great for the horse breeders in Alberta and great for the general public. It provides entertainment; it provides jobs. It's a part of our culture, being a western province. You look at a lot of the major cities, Edmonton and Calgary, and lots of horses have been used in the earlier days. The Calgary Stampede is based on agriculture, and horses have had so much to do with our history and our past. It's great to see that it's stayed alive, the horse-racing industry in Alberta.

I just think it is very, very important that the Auditor General be allowed to look into this act, into this board that is ultimately

appointed by the cabinet. Having his title in it, that the Auditor General Act does not apply to this portion – I think it needs to be taken out and the Auditor General given every opportunity to look into this act.

I hope the members on both sides of the House will support my amendment. Thank you.

5:10

The Chair: Anyone to speak to the amendment? The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I actually thank the member for the questions. He raises some good questions.

Mr. Chairman, the reason to exclude the corporation from the Auditor General Act is the same as the reason for excluding it from the Financial Administration Act and the Fiscal Management Act. The corporation does not function as an instrument of the government; that is, unlike other corporations such as AIMCo or Alberta pension services, it is not an agency established to carry out or facilitate the work of the government. Rather, the HRA is, in essence, a body for industry self-regulation, more akin in terms of function to the Law Society of Alberta or the Alberta Association of Architects, neither of which are provincial corporations.

Since HRA, for practical purposes, functions outside the government, it would not be logical, Mr. Chairman, for the Auditor General to be the auditor of the corporation. Of course, the Auditor General can still audit the grant funding provided by the government, but that is more limited and a more suitable interface.

Since HRA does not function as an instrument of government, it has been excluded from the responsibilities and controls that apply to provincial corporations under the FAA or the FMA. It is true that Horse Racing Alberta receives the majority of its revenues through grant funding from the government, but it is the funding agreement that should be the control mechanism that ensures productive use of that funding. Further, the funding agreement should, if it doesn't already, enable either the department or the Auditor General to inspect records of the corporation as necessary to ensure compliance with the provisions with the funding agreement.

Probably the more pertinent question, Mr. Chairman, is perhaps why directors of this particular corporation should be appointed by the government, which is what, but for the express exception, would trigger the categorization of provincial corporation and thus the application of the AGA, the FAA, and the FMA. The answer is governance.

The corporation represents and governs multiple stakeholders within the industry, and this has led to governance issues. Appointing a majority of directors who will not come from any particular stakeholder is a device to address the governance issues. Further, application of the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act will also bring further discipline, that should improve governance.

As for why the government cares about the governance of HRA, the circumstance that the corporation receives the majority of its revenues through grant funding from the government answers that question. Moreover, the government has a legitimate interest in the effectiveness of self-regulation of any industry.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I would ask that we vote down this amendment.

The Chair: Are there others speaking to the amendment?

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

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We're back to the bill.

Any more speakers on the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: It's my understanding that I'm expecting an amendment from a member this evening. Pursuant to that, I would like to move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

The Chair: The committee shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 1, Bill 3, and Bill 5. The committee reports progress on the following: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading
(continued)

Bill 6
Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Olson]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Yes. It's my honour and privilege to stand and talk to Bill 6, the Statutes Amendment Act. I know that the agriculture

minister did brief members of our caucus and our staff on this bill. I guess, basically, it talks about some changes in Municipal Affairs, the Safety Codes Act, the Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, some changes to the Workers' Compensation Act, and the Farm Implement Act.

I can see from looking at the bill that my first thoughts are that it's going to help our farm implement dealers. I hear from some of my colleagues and friends that are buying farm equipment that, you know, when they deal with the dealers, a lot of money is changing hands with the cost of our machinery these days. The farms are getting larger, and the equipment needs to get larger, too. It seems that everybody has less and less time to get their work done, so we need bigger equipment. This just protects the dealerships from equipment that's bought at auctions, public auctions. This gives them a little bit more security, I guess, that the equipment that they have to stand up for and cover under warranty is – the equipment is something they have to deal with, and they need to have the opportunity to stay competitive in today's market, and from what I've been told, this is something that our implement dealers are in favour of.

With that, I will take my seat and listen to the other members speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there other speakers on Bill 6?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been called.

The hon. minister of agriculture has moved second reading of Bill 6.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

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

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would propose that we adjourn until tonight at 7:30.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved that the House stand adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:19 p.m.]

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