



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Third Session

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Issue 8

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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

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Amery	Lukaszuk
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 27, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. O Holy Creator, as we conclude our work for this week in this Assembly, let us renew our energies as we return home in order to serve our constituents directly in our communities. Guide us there safely during this extraordinary snowfall today. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Minister of agriculture, you have some hall of famers to introduce.

Mr. Olson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly this year's inductee into the 4-H Alberta Hall of Fame. Charlie Gould is a resident of Rosalind, and he was inspired to become involved in 4-H by his father, Stan, who was also inducted into the hall of fame, in 1977. For 35 years Charlie has served as a 4-H leader for his local beef club, encouraged youth to get involved in the 4-H program, and taught life skills to the next generation of Albertans. We thank Mr. Gould for his outstanding dedication to his community and for serving youth as a mentor.

He's joined here today by Janet Kerr, the 4-H specialist from the east-west central region, who also happens to be his cousin. They're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Let us move on to school groups, starting with Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the brightest, sharpest, most intelligent 44 students from the Grace Martin elementary school in Edmonton-Mill Woods. Despite the weather their commitment to visit the Alberta Leg. brought them here. I would request that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?

If not, let's move on to other important guests, starting with the Minister of Transportation, followed by the ND House leader.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of Alberta Transportation employees from our deputy minister's office and the communication branch. These bright young public servants help provide me and my office with information and the support needed to address a wide range of transportation issues across the province, communicate effectively with the public, and ultimately achieve the mandate given to me by the hon. Premier. What's more, for all but one of these individuals it's their first time in question period here today in the Alberta Legislature. I'd ask each of them to stand as I read their names and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly: Erin Gregg, Jamie Friesen, Melanie Nolan, Carrie Sancartier, Tina Stewart, and Lyndsay Karges.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Mr. Eggen: 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 my guests from the Alberta Federation of Labour. My guests have been meeting with MLAs to lobby for affordable, accessible, high-quality public child care. I know it's some tough nuts to crack, but I'm sure that they convinced you all. I would like to ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Juanita O'Reilly, Darcy Thiessen, Cori Longo, Natasha Simons, Bruce Fafard, Siobhán Vipond. I also see Brad Lafortune there. You can stand up, too; don't be shy. If you can all give them a very warm Assembly welcome.

The Speaker: The Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, followed by the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Anne Lydia Sekandi and Robert Muhumuza. Anne is a private-sector partnership specialist at UNICEF Uganda. She has worked for UNICEF since March 2004. When asked what she thought of the weather today, she said that life is 20 per cent what happens and 80 per cent what you make of it. I hope the weather is better in New York. Anne is in Edmonton visiting Robert, and this is her first time visiting the Legislative Assembly. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they rise to receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a wonderful meeting just now with the president of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and also the executive director and former mayor Jan Reimer today, joined by members of the six on-reserve women's shelters from across the province. I learned a lot as a result of that meeting. I wanted to introduce, as well as Brenda Brochu and Jan, Janet Gladue from Bigstone, Darlene Lightning-Mattson from Sucker Creek, Delia Poucette from Eagle's Nest and Morley, and also Dennis Callihoo from Ermineskin, who joined them. Also, I wanted to recognize Sandra Ermineskin from Ermineskin, Doris Sweet Grass from Kainai, and Mary Lepine from Fort Chipewyan, who are unable to be here because of the weather. If they could please stand and be recognized by the Assembly through you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others?

Just before I call on the Clerk to go to the next item of business, please note that it's so cold out that even our clock inside the building here is frozen, so don't be taking your cues off there, please.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Let us begin. Two minutes each, please.

Mental Health

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Mr. Speaker, we don't talk about mental health very much in our communities. It's not exactly taboo, but we just don't know how to talk about the issue. Mental health can be the proverbial elephant in the room. The Brentwood murders in March of this year were horrifying. People still tear up when they

talk about the loss of these young people, but this horrible tragedy has one silver lining. In our constituency we now talk just a little bit more openly about mental health.

Early in 2015 our Calgary-Varsity constituency office is hosting a town hall to share the positives about what's happening with mental health in our community. We have a long way to go in this journey, but there is some heartening progress. We plan to invite the Alberta Children's hospital to share their research on brain health and to talk about how construction of the fourth wing of this hospital will help move mental health patients out of the basement. We plan to invite the University of Calgary to talk about the new initiative they launched this fall with community support to focus not only on the academic performance of students but on their overall well-being. We plan to invite the chamber of commerce to talk about how they're embedding mental health discussions in our workplace. We plan to invite researchers and experts on dementia and Alzheimer's to share what they're learning about how to strengthen brain health in our seniors, and of course we plan to invite our Minister of Health and his staff to share with us Alberta's plans to tackle these issues in the coming years.

Mental health affects all ages – children, teens, young people, adults, and seniors – and this government must continue to rise up and meet the challenges faced by my constituents and by all Albertans affected by mental health and by brain health. The issues and the solutions aren't the same, but progress is being made, and that, Mr. Speaker, is something to talk about.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Bill 202

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, a week ago I introduced a little bill called Bill 202, Safe and Inclusive Schools Statutes Amendment Act, 2014. Gee whiz. Well, that little pragmatic bill was, I hoped, going to help some sexual minority students to be able to ask their schools and have the school accommodate them in organizing a gay-straight alliance. I wanted to include the reference to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Education Act, and I wanted to take section 11.1 out of the Human Rights Act.

Well, yikes, Mr. Speaker. My goodness, what a fuss. What I have seen in the week that has passed is the government doing almost anything they can in order to stop Bill 202. There have been attempts to delay it by pushing it off timewise. Now we're going to have the government bring forward a bill – I wonder if it's written yet – that is going to purport to do the same thing except that it doesn't.

1:40

So I'm going to call this one as I see it if you'll allow me. I think that what we are seeing here is a group of people who are trying to impose their will on someone else's, yet that very will itself is enshrined with protection under both the Charter and the Human Rights Act. What I am not seeing is an answer to the question: how would a peer support group for sexual minorities in schools affect anything else? How does a peer support group in a school affect parental discretion or choice or home-schooling or anything else? How does the Charter get affected by that?

Thanks very much.

The Speaker: Thank you. I regret that your time is up.

Let's move on to Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Century Farm and Ranch Awards

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Century farm and ranch award salutes those families who have continuously owned and actively operated the same land in Alberta for a minimum of 100 years. That's a minimum of 100 years. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development manages the award. From a personal experience of dairy farming for many, many years I can certainly echo their words that farming and ranching consist of hard work and sacrifice combined with a healthy dose of energy and unrelenting faith.

The opportunity of new land combined with limitless spirit and vision are what brought our forefathers to Alberta. They homesteaded the land to build a family farm or ranch, the same land that many families continue to call home today. Courage and determination were what our parents and grandparents had, and they had plenty of it. Marked by the same spirit of steadfast determination, it is not surprising that second, third, and fourth generations continue to build this rich heritage of agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, today I wish to recognize all Albertan recipients of the Alberta Century farm and ranch award, in particular the two dozen families alone from my constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley who received the Alberta Century farm and ranch award this year. Agriculture is a heritage to be proud of and is reflected by the personal sacrifices, perseverance, and commitment to a family way of life. It is a legacy that can be passed on to Alberta's children for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

4-H Hall of Fame Inductee

Ms Fenske: Thank you. Today I rise to recognize National 4-H Month and this year's inductee into the 4-H Hall of Fame, Charlie Gould from Rosalind, seated in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, 4-H Month is an opportunity to recognize the important contribution the 4-H program makes in our communities as Alberta's largest youth organization, with more than 250,000 alumni, two of which are my very own children, who are alumni of the light horse club program.

Established in Alberta in 1917, 4-H strengthens our communities' connection to agriculture and passes important life skills on to our youth. It not only teaches its members agriculture-related skills; it also focuses on leadership, public speaking, and has evolved to include everything from beef and horses to computers and performing arts. Graduates of the program learn the importance of being active and engaged community members and leaders.

It's a proud heritage, Mr. Speaker, and Charlie Gould is further proof of that. He became involved in the 4-H program as a young child under the guidance of his father, Stan, who was inducted into the hall of fame in 1977. For 35 years Charlie has been a leader in the 4-H club, hosting workshops on his farm, promoting the program, and representing it on district and regional levels. While guiding the next generations in the ways of leadership and agriculture, he has also found time to volunteer with the ag society, various local fundraisers, and St. Elizabeth church. In fact, I think it's safe to say that if you had a cause you needed help fighting or an event you needed help setting up for or a church

property that you needed help maintaining, Charlie Gould would be the first in line to lend you a hand. Our 4-H program would not be possible without the selfless dedication of a group of very passionate volunteers, and Charlie Gould stands as a testament to that as well as an example of how generations of Albertans have been a part of the 4-H program.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

Home Renovation Contractors

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently Alberta homeowners were put on notice to ensure that they do their homework before prepaying any contractors for home remodelling or renovations. Over the course of several years and from over 20 homeowners one home renovating firm collected well over \$3 million in advance payments for projects which were either unfinished or never started. To everyone's dismay, the owner has now declared bankruptcy, with \$5.8 million in liabilities and only \$1.4 million in assets. Now these Albertans are left with the financial burden of paying for something that was never even started.

Mr. Speaker, this problem is not new and is a problem this Legislature needs to address. Currently contractors undertaking remodelling projects are required to maintain a security fund that can be applied to refunds for cancelled or unfinished work. However, the amount of funds required is not specified in either legislation or regulation, leaving the amount to the discretion of Service Alberta officials.

Furthermore, there is a concern that some contractors are taking advantage of these homeowners by simply collecting the cash, declaring bankruptcy, and opening a new company under a new name. This is an area where this Assembly needs to take the necessary steps to protect Albertans. As reported in the *Calgary Herald*, Service Alberta typically sets bonds in the \$25,000 to \$75,000 range, which is far too low for large-scale projects with estimated costs at well over \$100,000. In a letter sent to my office, a young family chronicles their experience dealing with the bankruptcy of their contractor and how they paid \$300,000 as a deposit to the company, who only had a bond set at \$25,000.

While an important balance must be struck between protecting homeowners and creating onerous regulations for business, it is clear that something needs to be done.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Rural Seniors' Lodges

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my fellow members would agree that Alberta is the best place to live, work, raise a family, and retire. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the individuals whose contributions throughout the years have helped make our province the incredible place it is today. Of course, I'm referring to Alberta's seniors.

Our Premier recognizes the contributions and the ongoing needs of our seniors and has created a new Seniors ministry to address their specific issues. Currently there are almost half a million seniors living in Alberta, and that number is expected to double by 2030, meaning that 1 in 5 Albertans will be a senior.

The growth of our seniors population means we will need more places for seniors to live and age with dignity, close to their families and friends. That's why my constituents were so pleased

to hear our Premier commit \$160 million over four years to expand, upgrade, and replace seniors' lodges throughout rural Alberta. Nearly 70 per cent of all seniors' lodges in Alberta are outside of large cities. In rural regions distances are greater, and services may be more limited, often leaving seniors with no choice but to move when a space opens up somewhere else. They can end up lonely and isolated in a new environment, and that's not acceptable or healthy. Enabling older Albertans to stay in familiar surroundings is the key to keeping them engaged, happy, and healthy as they age. This investment in rural seniors' lodges will help provide our seniors with safe and affordable accommodation options close to the communities that they helped build.

This is just one of the many recent commitments our government has made to improve the lives of seniors across Alberta. The new Seniors ministry has been in operation for 73 days, and already our government has shown Alberta's seniors that they are a priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, it is exactly 1:50 p.m., time for Oral Question Period. Please, when we get to question 6, restrict your preambles so that more time will be allowed for more members to ask more questions.

Let us begin with the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Oil and Gas Revenues

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, OPEC met in Vienna today, and it wasn't a good meeting for Alberta. West Texas intermediate is around \$69 and may fall further. The hole in next year's budget will be billions deep if this continues, and all indications are that it will. The fact is that based on this government's spending, they would need \$110 oil to actually balance the budget. They will either have to get a grip on wasteful spending, or we are headed very, very deep into debt. How far into debt is this Premier willing to go?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that all Albertans are concerned about the OPEC meeting, and based on what transpired today, OPEC apparently will continue to produce in excess of 30 million barrels of oil per day, putting us into a low-price environment. This should be a cause of concern for all Albertans. It's certainly a cause of concern for the government. However, it is not time to panic. I would make two points. One is that this government will continue to be prudent in the administration of the finances of this province, and secondly, Albertans will be tough and resilient, and we will get through this.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, this government is trying to convince Albertans that this is not business as usual, but other than for a brief period in 2008 and the last few years oil has always been around where it is today or lower. In other words, business as usual is exactly where we're at today. It was the price spikes that were the aberrations. A responsible government would have planned for surpluses during the boom so that we wouldn't be faced with what we're looking at today. Instead, this government took us deeper into debt when revenues were never higher. What is the Premier going to do now?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I have been the Premier of this province at this point for less than three months. I can assure

yourself and Albertans of one thing, and that is that in the low-price environment which we are in, we will be disciplined, we will be prudent, and we will be cautious. We are focused on balancing the budget in the fiscal year which we are currently in. I've made it very clear to Albertans that this is not business as usual. We'll press on. We will deal with this. This province is tough and resilient. We have seen low price cycles before, and we will get through this.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, he certainly knew the record of the party he was running for when he chose to run for leader.

Everyone who has been in Alberta for a while remembers the bumper sticker: please, God, give us another oil boom; I promise not to fritter it all away next time. This government just refuses to learn. For them every boom is an opportunity to fritter away more money. Alberta keeps going through ups and downs of energy prices, and they never get it right. What is the Premier going to do now that energy revenues seem to be returning to their normal levels?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, energy prices are certainly not at their normal levels. This is a low point in the price cycle. We will deal with that. This province is in a strong fiscal position. At this point we are in a strong position to weather this, but weather this we must. It's going to take the support of all Albertans to do so. I hope that we will have the support of the opposition. We have the lowest tax rates in Canada. We have a competitive advantage in this province, both a fiscal advantage and a tax advantage. We will aspire to maintain that, and we ask the opposition to support us.

The Speaker: Second main set of questions. The hon. Official Opposition leader.

Long-term Care for Seniors

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have asked this government for a real plan to actually build 24-hour long-term care nursing beds. These are not the same as continuing care beds. Some patients need round-the-clock care. If they don't get it, terrible things can happen like festering wounds that lead to deadly infections. Today I'm tabling a picture of a dementia patient in continuing care in Fort McMurray whose daughter found her with a horrible fungus growing on her hand, smelling of urine, and left in feces. Isn't anyone over there distressed by this?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, that issue happened in a particular place in the province of Alberta. They were on that issue immediately. They found out about it on Friday night. Saturday morning Alberta Health Services were on top of that issue. They worked very diligently. They worked with the people to ensure that the individual was taken care of. It's a very, very difficult situation. It's a real travesty. We don't like it to happen, but in a system sometimes things go awry. We apologize for it. At the same time, Alberta Health Services was on top of it, and they did everything they possibly could.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, it never should have happened in the first place.

Some things have to be priorities. Dr. Paul Parks says that the government wastes \$400 million a year by having long-term care patients in acute-care beds in hospitals. If we build the right beds and we staff them right, we can look after our seniors better and save money. Alberta is the richest jurisdiction in the richest country in the world. Surely, we can run a system where vulnerable seniors

do not have to suffer horrific wounds while in care. When will the government do something about this?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, a few months ago this government under this leader made decisions to build 300 long-term care beds in conjunction with 1,200 continuing care beds. We also made arrangements to move 750 people from acute-care beds into these long-term care beds, of which 464 will be moved over the next six to nine months. We are taking every step possible to ensure that access to the acute-care beds is made available by operating more long-term care beds. This government is acting.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we know it's not going to be enough. This government has money for phantom jobs for failed executives and fired political staffers. It has money for sky palaces. It has money for communications consultants and executive coaches. It has money for severances and for fake airplane passengers. We have shown the government that they can improve care for our seniors and save money. Why can't this government understand that looking after our vulnerable seniors is their priority?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, looking after seniors is everyone's priority. No one in this country or in this province cares more about seniors than this government and, I'm sure, everybody on that side of the table. All of us care deeply about making sure our seniors have the best care possible. This government is committed to that. We're building long-term care beds, continuing care beds, assisted and supportive living beds. We are committed to doing all we can to ensure that our seniors are properly cared for. That is a vitally important part of my ministry, the Seniors ministry, and this Premier's vision for this province.

The Speaker: Third and final main question. The Official Opposition leader.

Feeder Association Loan Guarantee Program

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, several Wildrose caucus members have been asking the government about the feeder association loan guarantee program, and the answers have not been good. This program has a long history, and it's been an overwhelming success. It has helped our beef industry and, in so doing, has been good for ranchers, consumers, and the Alberta economy. Recent government changes have resulted in only half the number of feeders who used to get loans actually getting them. Will the minister do the right thing and double the guarantee to the feeder association loan guarantee program?

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

Mr. Olson: Yes. Mr. Speaker, we've dealt with this question several times, and I'll repeat the answer again. We are at a time of all-time highs in the cattle industry. It's a very vibrant and buoyant industry right now. People have more equity than they had before. I'd ask the member to remember that the origins of this industry were during the Depression, when people had no money to buy cattle, and we have people who, I think, do have the ability to borrow. This isn't the only program through which you can borrow money, and I'd also invite the banks to be a little bit more flexible in their lending as well.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, people are still recovering from the BSE crisis. This has been one good year, Minister.

I ask this question because major employers in southern Alberta like JBS in Brooks and Cargill in my riding are starting to be concerned about the long-term availability of cattle. Cattle exports to the U.S., particularly calf exports, are at an all-time high. The feeder association loan guarantee program has a very low default rate. Doubling the guarantee will have next to no effect on provincial coffers, but hurting the beef industry definitely will. Why won't the minister just double the guarantee?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned before also, we are fiscal conservatives over here on this side. I'd like the hon. member to understand that a guarantee means legal liability, and we are just simply asking the industry at a time of very buoyant prices to also take some responsibility. I have certainly been asked by industry members to double up on the guarantee. There are more ways of doing it than just doubling up on the guarantee, and we are looking at innovative ways to assist, but the industry needs to take responsibility, too.

The Speaker: Thank you.

2:00

Ms Smith: Seriously, Mr. Speaker? They've given a \$26 billion loan guarantee to the North West upgrader but won't help everyday, regular farmers?

The default rate on this guarantee is tiny. In 77 years there have been only 17 defaults on this program, around one one-hundredth of a percentage of the amount guaranteed. If our beef plants shut down because of a lack of cattle, the impact will be huge. Increasing the guarantee promotes raising and feeding more cattle in Alberta. If something isn't done, there is a risk that consumers will lose, packing plants will lose, their employees will lose, and ranchers will lose. Why won't this minister do the right thing?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that this is coming up now. We spent a year – we had a committee that reviewed the whole program with Feeder Associations. We came up with some things to create more flexibility such as doubling up on individual loan amounts, creating other types of flexibility. This wasn't one of the issues that was being specifically asked for at the time. What has happened in recent months has been that we've got cattle prices that are 65 percent, even 75 per cent higher than they were a year ago. It could be a short-term thing. I'm also having people in the industry telling me that we should not be increasing.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Ms Blakeman: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. GSAs save kids' lives, plain and simple. They save kids' lives in the public school system, and they would save kids' lives in the Catholic school system, and they would save kids' lives in the private system. So let me ask the Premier: how does accommodating gay-straight alliances requested by students for schools contravene anyone else's rights and freedoms?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, there's no room for intolerance in our education system, and this government has been very clear. This is a commonly held value, evidently. We wish to promote safe, respectful learning environments for our children. The rights in question involve the rights of our children not to be discriminated against based on their sexual orientation, the rights of parents to have a say in the education of their children, and the rights of

school boards, who are elected to administer these education systems. We will balance those rights in a way that Albertans expect.

Ms Blakeman: Couldn't seem to answer that.

Well, next question to the Premier: will the Premier be allowing a free vote for his government bill in the same way that he allowed it for Bill 202?

The Speaker: This calls for some opinion, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Prentice: Yes.

Ms Blakeman: That was easy. All righty.

Well, back to the same Premier, or the Premier; sorry. Given that section 11.1 is a thinly disguised approval to discriminate against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity, why is this government planning to reinforce this by leaving it as is after it moves it to the Education Act?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that she need only deal with this Premier moving forward. There is no room for intolerance in our education system. We are agreed on that. We need to deal with the rights of parents, the rights of our children, and the constitutionally embedded rights of school boards in this province. That's precisely what we will do. This involves a balancing of rights. These are complex issues that matter greatly in terms of the protection and the education of our children, and we will strike the right balance.

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

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, unending amounts of research conclude that gay-straight alliances provide much needed support to the lives of LGBTQ kids and their friends when they are bullied. You've just announced that school boards will be allowed to say no to them. To the Premier: when the school board says no to a group of kids, would you recommend that they (a) just suck it up, (b) leave the school, or (c) perhaps just turn the other cheek?

Mr. Prentice: As I have said, we support a tolerant, safe environment for children. We support an environment in which children are able to come forward and pursue diversity clubs and the protection of sexual orientation differences within the school environment. There are rights that need to be balanced in terms of the education system, in terms of parental rights. These are complex questions that need to have a balance, and that's precisely where this government stands. We will not pit Albertans against each other.

Ms Notley: It's too late for that, Mr. Speaker. He's already done it, and he's made sure that it's going to happen for a long time to come.

With this law, that allows school boards to prohibit GSAs, this Premier has shown himself to be as socially conservative as any lake-of-fire candidate. Indeed, it's as though he's consciously trying to move Alberta back in time. [interjections] I'm sorry. You may not like this, but this is real.

To the Premier: why have you caved in to intolerance and bigotry and failed to support GLBTQ students, who are trying to protect only themselves and their friends from bullying?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, you don't raise your own reputation by trying to lower others'. I have fought my entire life in this province to protect religious freedoms – my record is clear – to advance parental rights for children in the education system, and

to stand up in defence of the rights of gay and lesbian people in this country.

Ms Notley: Well, the Premier continuously tries to suggest this is about balancing rights. I will admit that I'm not intimately familiar with the arguments of those social conservatives who are offended by GSAs, so perhaps the Premier can explain to me now: how does the existence of a voluntary extracurricular GSA infringe on the rights of anyone else?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I would again encourage the hon. member to consider our Constitution, to consider the position of separate school boards under our Constitution. I would encourage her to consider the Alberta Bill of Rights. I would encourage her to consider the Charter relative to the right not to be discriminated against based on sexual orientation, and I would invite her to consider and to look across the country at parental rights, which involve the rights of parents to be involved in making decisions relative to the education of their children. These are rights that are the cornerstone of who we are as Albertans. There are strongly held views. They need to be balanced.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Long-term Care Beds

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The difference between continuing care and long-term care nursing beds is significant. Before my mum passed away, she was in continuing care, and her health eventually deteriorated. Her doctor made it very clear to us that she needed to go to a long-term care nursing bed, or she would have to stay in a hospital bed. Minister, there were no long-term care beds available. My mum was what you have referred to as a bed blocker. How many long-term care nursing beds do we have now, and how many long-term care nursing beds will we have next year?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I inadvertently used that term once, and I apologize for it. It was an improper term, and it shouldn't be used here as well.

This Premier has made every effort to create as many long-term beds as possible. We have committed to delivering 750 beds immediately. It's going to take us a bit of time – 446 of those beds will be ready within the next six to nine months; the other ones will have to be built – but we are searching through the system to see if we can find more. We're working with every supplier in the province to try to find ways to use the facilities they might have to increase the opportunity for long-term care beds. We're committed to it.

2:10

Mrs. Forsyth: So, Minister, let's talk about your suppliers, then. Given that seniors' care providers were completely caught off guard by your suggestion that they would suddenly turn their existing supportive living care beds into long-term care beds – the spokesman from AgeCare said that they actually haven't had any requests from AHS to do this – where are the beds going to come from?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we work through Alberta Health Services, and they've committed to making sure that the program will be completed. There's a very clear list. It's made public. We will have a certain number of beds ready in three months, in six

months, in nine months, and then we'll have to build some. I don't know what the hon. member is speaking about, but my understanding is that we're moving ahead on schedule. It will be difficult, but we're committed to doing it.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, I'll provide you with that information.

Minister, not one of your new continuing care beds would have helped my mum or helped hundreds of other patients facing the exact same problem across this province. Given that last year alone you closed 200 long-term care beds and that, in the most recent stats we have, you have 571 seniors waiting for long-term care nursing beds, not continuing care, your numbers don't add up. You closed 200 this year. You indicated earlier that you were adding 300. Where are you going to put the rest of the seniors?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that the Minister of Seniors has also announced an additional 1,200 beds on top of the 300 they've allocated for long-term care beds. In his group there will also be long-term care beds. My allocation is the extra 300. We realize that there are other people who are going to need long-term care support on the continuum, so we will continue to work with the Minister of Seniors to develop programs so that we can have the beds needed. This is not going to be an easy process. We have also done everything we possibly can to ensure that beds are moved ahead as quick as possible, in co-operation with the Minister of Seniors.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

Oil and Gas Prices

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm asking on behalf of the many industries and residents in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, many of whom depend on the petrochemical industry. Volatility in oil prices, though, impacts all Albertans. To the Minister of Energy: what action will you be taking to respond to this development in crude?

Mr. Oberle: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. I would ask her to note that as exporters we are price-takers, not price-makers. There are certain things that we can't control in the world markets. There are things, however, that we can control, and we're certainly doing that. First, of course, is access to world markets. It's imperative that we get access to world markets so that we get world prices for our products. In addition to that, we're continuing on our development of upgrading and refining capacity in the province. Today we produce about 2.1 million barrels of bitumen. Over half of that is upgraded, and just under half of that is further refined in our province. We're going to continue . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Ms Fenske: Thank you. We applaud value-added.

Given that yesterday's price was \$75 for oil, some suggest that today we are in a crisis situation. Are you confident, Minister of Finance, that your predictions for the other sectors are solid?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, again, the prices are low today because of the decisions by OPEC, but as I've said before in this House and as I've said publicly, we budget our oil

on a yearly basis. We do have some concerns that it's low right now and with the fact that OPEC is not going to cut the production. But we're going to be very fiscally prudent in our spending for the rest of this year to make sure that we balance the budget. We will be sitting down with our ministers in cabinet, as I said yesterday in the House, to look at next year's budget.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Fenske: Thank you. To the same minister: given the volatility of oil prices over the past year and their continuing change in pricing, how can the minister be confident that we are accurately forecasting our oil prices, philosophically speaking?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I'm not a very philosophical person, but I will give you some comments based on the fact that we consult with a number of experts, like economists, we talk to banks, we talk to the energy industry. Their insights help us actually adjust our forecast on a quarterly basis as we look at changing trends throughout the year. Next week I'll be meeting with the leading chief economists across the country to get their thoughts. As a government we have always been very conservative in our forecasting. We've never taken the high that the experts have told us to take; we've never taken the low. So as this year shows, we've had a very good first six months, and we're going to have a very good last six months.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

Electricity Cogeneration

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cogeneration electricity is another example of innovation being done by industry in the oil sands. It's cleaner, friendlier for the environment, and it's growing. Considering that we've seen this government strip the rights of landowners and skip the independent approval process to build billions of dollars in transmission lines, the lack of partnerships with our industry on this is puzzling. Can the minister explain what is being done to ensure that clean, cheap, and reliable energy can be better accessed by the rest of the province?

Mr. Oberle: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. First of all, to point out that the premise of his question is entirely wrong, we've stripped no one of their landowner rights. Second of all, the thing that we need to do to ensure that cogeneration is available to the whole province is to build transmission.

Mr. Hale: It's to build transmission in Fort McMurray, not in southeast Alberta.

Given that the federal phase-out of coal will begin in 2020 and leave a sizable gap in our generation capacity and given that according to AESO's own projections cogeneration electricity produced in the oil sands will be providing more electricity to the grid, why did this government plow through building unnecessary lines from coal plants and ignore the infrastructure needed to bring more power onto the grid from Fort McMurray?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the hon. member's constituents will be concerned to learn that he doesn't think that they need electricity, but we think they do. That's why we built a transmission grid across this province.

In early 2015 the production of electricity by natural gas, including cogeneration, will exceed that of coal in our province.

The backbone of this province, its transmission system, is ready to receive it.

Mr. Hale: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the government did rescind the part of Bill 50 that gave them the opportunity to tell where the lines are needed because they didn't have the authority to do that and given that the Bill 50 lines have been described as the Cadillac of transmission lines and given that the coal phase-out is only five short years away and no discernible progress has been made on the Fort McMurray lines, will the minister explain what steps his department is taking to ensure that cogen operators in Fort McMurray have access to the grid?

Mr. Oberle: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're building a transmission system by a competitive process. The bids are in. The successful proponent will be announced shortly. That's something that I thought they wanted, too. Apparently not. We're building the backbone. It will be ready.

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

School Infrastructure Decision-making

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Constituents in Calgary-Varsity support critical infrastructure spending, but they also care about fiscal prudence. Decisions are currently being made in my community about the construction of education facilities, and people are worried that decisions are being made in silos. To the Minister of Education. The reconstruction of Christine Meikle school is supported by our community, yet constituents are noticing that the facilities for medically fragile students are also needed by other local facilities. How can you ensure that these decisions about infrastructure are made with a local community lens?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Dirks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Albertans have told us to trust local school jurisdictions to make decisions that are in the best interests of children in their particular areas. It's the local municipality and school boards that decide where schools are going to be built and decide the makeup of the program that's going to go to the school. We certainly encourage school jurisdictions to communicate and consult with their communities when they're making those location decisions. I recently was in contact with the Calgary board of education, and they've indicated to me that they want to improve their consultation process with communities as they make these school location decisions.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: That's good news, Mr. Minister.

How will you support a community-focused approach and efficiencies to the modernization or the reconstruction of the Foundations for the Future charter school presently being planned in the Montgomery community?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right in saying that planning for the Foundations for the Future modernization project is currently under way. As I indicated previously, we support the local school jurisdiction, which is responsible for determining the programming and the makeup of the school. We encourage them to establish partnerships with the local community associations, and we monitor to see whether that, indeed, does happen.

2:20

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Now to the mighty Minister of Infrastructure. What other policy changes, incentives, penalties, carrots and sticks, can be adopted within your ministry to discourage silo thinking in decisions about infrastructure?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is really an issue that doesn't take might as much as it takes co-operation. We have 78 schools in the planning process across the province right now. Now is the time to get school boards, local municipalities, and nonprofits around the table to make decisions very quickly. I see no reason why gyms in our schools, libraries in our schools cannot be constructed in a way that they can provide very valuable community resources outside of school hours. Now's the time to have those conversations, to move swiftly to ensure that the infrastructure that we build serves our communities around the clock.

Education Funding

Mr. Hehr: Conservative claims that they are keeping up the funding of core programs like our K through 12 education system are a complete and utter fallacy, and let me point out how. Forty-five thousand kids have started school in the last four years, yet if we were truly concerned about education funding, with the growth of student population we would have seen at least 2,500 more teachers. To the minister: how do you expect to maximize the potential of Alberta kids when you're shortchanging them on having teachers in classrooms?

Mr. Dirks: I thank the member opposite for his question. If there's anything that we're concerned about, Mr. Speaker, as government and my ministry, it's ensuring that we provide quality education for all children in our schools. We have injected considerable increases in funding in recent years, overall 2 per cent last year, and we will continue to ensure that we are providing the teacher resources in the classrooms that are needed to make sure that all children have a quality education.

Mr. Hehr: Well, that's simply not true, Mr. Speaker. The grants that they used to give to school boards – statistics don't lie – show how this government has abandoned children. You can look at the student-teacher ratio. From five short years ago the average class size in our kindergarten through grade 3 classes has shot up now by 10 per cent. High schools are reporting classes with over 40 students. Alberta parents have stated time and time again that they want smaller class sizes. If we're not shortchanging education funding, why do the numbers continue to get worse?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, the notion that we are abandoning children is nonsensical. The truth is that we are ensuring that all of our children in all of our schools are adequately supported and that our teachers have the resources that they need to teach our children in a fashion that's going to prepare them for the 21st century. School boards receive a significant sum of money from the provincial purse, and we leave it up to the local jurisdiction to determine what their priorities are as to where they're going to allocate their funds. We know that they allocate properly for the needs of their children.

Mr. Hehr: Just before the by-election the government, in a frenzy to make it look like they were going to build schools, announced eight starter schools for both Calgary and Edmonton public, yet

we learned today that the school boards do not want starter schools. Instead, they prefer complete schools to be built when the province is able to provide the funds. Did the minister bother consulting with any of these duly elected school boards prior to the announcement of these starter schools, which, by the way, they don't want?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, if school jurisdictions want to change a proposal for a particular type of school, whether it's a starter school or a fully built-out school, that's their prerogative, and we certainly would receive proposals from them. If that's what they wished to do, we would evaluate them appropriately and then make a determination based on their recommendation to us and our review of the situation.

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

Royal Alexandra Hospital Acute-care Tower

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the NDP released documents to show that PC neglect of the Royal Alexandra acute-care tower means that now a completely new structure is required in order to reduce infection rates. Cross-contamination risks are high because too many patients are in each room. The ventilation system cannot meet the bare minimum infection-control standards. To the Minister of Health: why has your government ignored these serious hazards, that threaten the health of patients, for so long, and what are you going to do about it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to point out that just recently, in 2010, the government of Alberta invested over \$170 million to build the new Lois Hole hospital for women, which is really one of the finest facilities in the country. Recently they had 94,000 ambulatory patients come in and, what's quite wonderful, 6,500 births last year.

To the hon. member's question, the Royal Alexandra hospital is old. The tower is old, and it does need some work, but let's give credit to the people that work there. Their infection rates are better than anywhere else in this country. Alberta is one of the best in this country, and they're right there with it.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, given that the workers have to compensate for poor planning over a long period of time, they do a great job because this government did a very poor job in building the hospital and in maintaining the hospital as well. To the Minister of Health again. Planning implies forward thinking. How can you possibly plan for the future when you've neglected everything well past the expiry date of this hospital?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, the Royal Alexandra tower is a very, very precious part of the Royal Alexandra hospital, which is key to health care in the centre of the city of Edmonton. This government is putting together a plan, to come out some time in the middle of next year, to look at what we need to do with the tower at the Royal Alexandra hospital. We're committed to fixing it, and we will do all we can. You know, this hospital means a great deal to the people in our city. We have to maintain it. We are maintaining it. There's incredible care given by the men and women who deliver it at that hospital.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that these documents released today also review that this government is considering

building a Royal Alex tower through a P3 model – Auditors General in both Ontario and Quebec have panned the idea of P3s for hospitals, and this summer your government had to abandon P3 models for schools that did not get built. To the Minister of Health: would you commit today that your government will reject the P3 model for the Royal Alex tower, and if not, will you explain why you're going to put both public money and public health at risk when our health care system is already in crisis?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, we have one of the most aggressive capital builds in North America taking place here in Alberta. We will look for the most cost-effective, solutions-oriented ways to build our capital infrastructure, whether that be schools, seniors' homes, or hospitals, because what Albertans want is a focus on the services they need, and that's what we'll deliver.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Environmental Monitoring

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Responsible monitoring of oil sands development is critical to keeping our economy strong, protecting our environment, and securing pipeline deals, but the Auditor General's October report said that this government's monitoring information is 15 months old and lacking clarity, this at the very moment that critical pipeline projects hang in the balance. To the Premier. The world is watching. We need to do better. Why is this happening?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, we clearly must place a priority on successful monitoring and on having world-leading standards. The AEMERA process is a good process resulting from collaboration between this provincial government and the federal government. To be fair, the report that the hon. member refers to was referring to the transitional period when AEMERA was set up. AEMERA is in good hands. Dr. Lorne Taylor and Dr. Greg Taylor are responsible for AEMERA. They're doing an excellent job of getting it up and running and achieving the standards that are expected by Albertans.

The Speaker: Supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has shown no accountability toward monitoring sustainable resource development and the Auditor General's report proves that, again to the Premier: with oil prices free-falling, inefficiencies and delays mounting, First Nations groups walking away, and critical pipeline projects hanging in the balance, what is your plan to fix your broken monitoring system and deliver responsible resource management for future generations?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a dark picture indeed, which I don't subscribe to. Certainly, we are in a low-price environment; we've spoken about that earlier in question period. But in terms of environmental monitoring, clearly this government and, I hope, everyone in the House aspires to have a world-class system of monitoring. That's a national objective, and it's a provincial objective. What the Auditor General's report shows more than anything else is that we are in transition in terms of arriving at that process and achieving a monitoring system which we can all be proud of.

2:30

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General highlighted ineffective project management, not making timelines, and not meeting

their objectives. How can this Premier and this minister expect to build the energy infrastructure when clearly there's no plan to do what's needed?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, clearly, there is a plan. As I say, the Auditor General's report – I acknowledge his work. His work is important. His work was done at a time when we were in transition from the old monitoring regime to the new. The report says quite clearly, if you read it, that he's talking about the transitional period and that we need to make progress. There are good hands in charge of the monitoring process. They have the right objectives. We'll get this done, and we'll do it in a way that Albertans can be proud of.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Seniors' Housing in Fort McMurray

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, last Friday was a mighty great day in Fort McMurray. After many years of struggling to acquire the land that's known as Willow Square, the government finally announced that this land transfer is complete. Now, as fantastic as that news is, we still have many of my constituents that are worried about the timelines on this development. To the Minister of Seniors: what are the plans for this site, and what are the timelines of the transfer?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it was a great day. A lot of people worked very hard on this, including the two MLAs from Fort McMurray, the great mayor they have up there, and many seniors. For technical and logistical reasons it took some time. But thanks to the leadership of this Premier and the Prime Minister, once they had their first meeting, it was one of the first issues they discussed. I'm very happy to say that the government has acquired a hundred per cent of the land from the federal government, and we will be transferring \$3 million as well as a \$17 million site as per the request of the municipality. I'm advised that that transfer is going to the Wood Buffalo housing authority, and I'm advised that the final details of that transfer will be finalized in the next two to three weeks. So it's good news.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Allen: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the seniors in my constituency have expressed a need for seniors' housing, what assurances can you give them that there will be provisions made for seniors' accommodations at Willow Square?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it's a good question. My understanding is that there are some concerns in the community. But I want to assure seniors and folks in Fort McMurray that there are expectations and, indeed, conditions to this grant. Firstly, Wood Buffalo housing will engage in extensive consultation with community stakeholders, including the Fort McMurray Seniors Advisory Council, to ensure that those diverse needs of the community are met. Secondly, the transfer and this grant have been with the understanding and the expectation that the site will be used substantively for seniors and affordable housing. This government wants to enable and empower the local community to build the vision that they have created, and these are the tools they needed to do it. This is what the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.
Final supplemental.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Wood Buffalo has been waiting a very long time for a real continuing care facility, and we have one planned at Parsons Creek. When will we see a shovel in the ground?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The tender will be hitting the streets in January, and my expectation is that construction will be starting next construction season. This is a very important project, a hundred beds, very significant for the community. The tender will be hitting the streets within, as I said, about a month.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Calgary-West.

X-ray Services in Vilna and Saddle Lake

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's for a broken bone or for preventative medicine, many of us need an X-ray at one time or another. The residents of Vilna and Saddle Lake are no different, but due to a decision by AHS they must now travel upwards of an hour each way on highway 28, the road the Premier has called the worst in the entire province, to receive the same services that were once available right at home. It's unacceptable. Does the new minister agree with the decision made by AHS?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, they're constantly arguing whether or not AHS spends too much money or they're spending it not in the right ways. AHS has the ability to make decisions about what projects they support and don't support, what equipment they keep or don't keep in order to supply services to communities. I think in this particular instance the machine was old and was decommissioned. We'll look now at what we can do to replace it to help the community. But they took the steps in order to deal with what it was.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He brings up money. Given that the local firefighters' association has expressed their willingness to raise money to ensure their friends and neighbours receive the health care they need and given that AHS has told them in no uncertain terms they won't allow the local community leaders to raise the money, can the minister explain why AHS believes the residents of Vilna shouldn't receive the health care they need?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we very, very much appreciate the firefighters or any philanthropic organization making efforts to raise money to help with the health care system. It's done throughout the province. But that's the capital side; there's an operating side. So whenever we do something, we have to realize the machine must operate, there must be people to operate it, and that costs money and has to have a budget. In order to do that, we need to make sure that that money is available, and we'd be glad to look into that.

Mr. Saskiw: You should just let them know the amount.

Given that this is a critical need for the residents of Vilna and Saddle Lake and given that the community is willing to raise money for this vital piece of health care infrastructure, will the minister commit today, right now, to allowing the residents of Vilna to get their X-ray machine back?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we will not commit to anything today. We believe that Alberta Health Services investigated what was needed. What we will commit to is to look into what happened and let this House know how we might be able to be of help to that community. We are looking at our rural health strategy. Rural Alberta is vitally important to this government, and we'll continue to work with them. We'll be glad to look into it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

Homelessness

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week seven major municipalities across Alberta released preliminary data from a co-ordinated homeless point-in-time count. The cities conducted counts in October to find out that there are over 6,600 Albertans without a place to call home. To the Minister of Human Services. The province's 10-year plan to end homelessness is in its sixth year, and there are still thousands of Albertans without a home. Is this plan working, or has it failed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The most recent homeless count, as I said the other day, has shown a decrease of 16 per cent province-wide since the launch of our plan. We know the population has grown by 100,000 people a year, but in Edmonton homelessness is 27 per cent lower; Lethbridge, 45 per cent; Wood Buffalo, 49 per cent. We've also invested up to \$83 million this year alone. Nearly 10,000 people have been provided housing and support since the launch of this plan. While these results are impressive, we know we have more work to do.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. The point-in-time counts reveal that in large municipalities such as Calgary, there is an increase in family and youth homelessness. Is anything being done to address supports for some of the most vulnerable in the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of youth homelessness is very much indeed on this government's mind. Alberta was the first in Canada to adopt the point-in-time count province-wide and also to work with all of the community partners to target outreach programs that meet local needs like youth. For example, in Edmonton we have Nova house, that provides approximately 20 beds to youth through the Edmonton John Howard Society, and the Boys & Girls Club infinity project, which helps youth with financial and other supports as well.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. We know winters in Alberta can be brutal, such as today, and media reports say that emergency shelters are often over capacity. How will the current homeless population be supported during the upcoming winter months?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the winter storm is upon us. I know that our community partners in the seven

major centres are working hard to deliver their emergency plans to ensure homeless individuals have a safe and warm place to be. We are supporting these plans with \$1.6 million from our government and \$1.6 million from the federal government as well. This is going to help add 320 more bed spaces as well as warming centres and emergency shuttle services. This is in addition to the \$39 million the province has already invested in the operation of 3,200 spaces across Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Funding for Smaller Municipalities

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties asked this government to set aside one-third of the small communities fund from the new building Canada fund, or approximately \$31 million over 10 years, for communities with populations of 10,000 or less. To the Minister of Infrastructure: having heard the AAMD and C concerns and given that 33 per cent of Albertans live in communities with populations of 10,000 or less, will you now meet the request of the AAMD and C and provide adequate funding for these communities?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question, a very important question that came from AAMD and C. The small communities funding out of the building Canada fund is to Alberta, and it's designated for communities under 100,000 in population. That is the criteria that is set out by the federal government. Those dollars will be flowing through our Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and as soon as they start flowing to us, we'll get them out to the communities.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Yes. This time to the Transportation minister. Considering that program received no new funding in this current budget and in the next budget receives only \$75 million for previously submitted applications, can communities instead use the new building Canada fund and the small communities fund specifically as an alternative funding source for waste-water projects?

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be a great idea. They would have to apply to it and be successful. But I've also asked for an increase in my budget for water and waste water as well, and we've asked to have some of the building Canada fund moved into the water/waste-water components. Either way, hopefully, we can get some more money. If the small communities want to use it for that, that would be great.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, last week the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka raised a question of water for life funding in the town of Blackfalds. This program has not met the needs of this community and others either. To the Transportation minister again: will this government, then, commit to reinstate and enhance funding for the Alberta municipalities water/waste-water partnership, the water for life program, in the 2015 provincial budget?

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've already said, this is a very important program for all Alberta municipalities, and I support it very much. I think there's lots that we need to do there, and I agree with the member. I've asked for that. I think he's asking the question to the wrong minister. Maybe next time he could ask it to the President of Treasury Board.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. Oral Question Period has concluded.

I'm going to ask to revert to Introduction of Guests in just a moment, but before I do, I have three quick observations to make. I want to share with you as I've shared with all caucuses now that the last few days I've received the most phone calls ever of a positive nature about the conduct of all members of this House. You have elevated the level of decorum significantly, and that has spread amongst all four parties, including the independent. So congratulations, and thank you on behalf of Albertans.

Number two, please note that a record number of members were able to be recognized for their questions, I think directly as a result of what I just said. We've had up to 16, 17, and, on Monday, 18 different members, which set a record for this particular group.

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

The Speaker: The final point is just exactly that. Two weeks have gone by now and not one single point of order, which sets a record for this Assembly. So please know that you are all part of history, in the most positive way, from my perspective.

Could we now revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Let us proceed with the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just noticed that somebody who is very much a leader in his community has just joined us for the remaining moments of question period, and I did want to draw the attention of our members. I introduce to you and through you Mr. Dan St. Pierre, who is the director of operations and communications for the Metis Settlements General Council. Dan is definitely a fine contributor to his community and somebody that I think many of us here recognize, so we would like to say hello and offer you a warm welcome today.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three items for which to provide notice to the House today. First, I would like to give oral notice of the intention to introduce Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, which will be sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to provide oral notice of intention to introduce Bill 11, the Savings Management Repeal Act, which will be sponsored by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give oral notice of Government Motion 10.

Be it resolved that the following changes to, one, Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved, that Mr. Hale replace Mrs. Towle; two, that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved, that Mr. McAllister replace Mr. Amery; and three, that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be approved, that Mrs. Towle replace Mr. Lemke.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, do you have a tabling today?

Mr. Bilous: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. We're moving along quite quickly today. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter written by Eric Musekamp of the Farmworkers Union of Alberta. Eric writes about another needless farm worker fatality in Alberta. On November 4 60-year-old Charles Stauffer, husband, father of two, and grandfather of six, died while working on a feedlot near Raymond. The Farmworkers Union of Alberta is asking this PC government to "support and endorse OHS legislation and mandatory WCB for our agricultural workers to help prevent this tragedy from befalling another innocent Alberta family."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others?

If not, hon. members, I'd like to take the liberty to rise and table five copies of the biographies of our pages. As you know, we have

seven brand new pages, and each of them has a very interesting story to tell, albeit said ever so briefly in the biographies. Please take a moment to read these and get to know our wonderful pages.

Thank you very much.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker. I do have a tabling, five copies of a letter from a constituent that the hon. opposition leader referred to earlier in regard to the picture of the infection that the senior had and that she was describing in her question.

The Speaker: Thank you. We will be careful when we're doing speeches and referring to things we present as a tabling to not use them as a prop. It's a fine line. I didn't see anything too incorrect with the procedure just handled, and I'm grateful for the tabling. Thank you.

Hon. members, we have no points of order, as I have just mentioned, so we can proceed onward.

Orders of the Day

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, given the treacherous roads that we have – in fact, I've just learned of a serious accident in Red Deer where a sheriff has been injured – I would like to propose that we stand adjourned until Monday.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 2:48 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 28th Legislature - 3rd Session (2014)

Activity to November 26, 2014

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

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

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

1 Respecting Property Rights Act (Prentice)

First Reading -- 6 (Nov. 17, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 30-31 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., adjourned), 142-146 (Nov. 24, 2014 eve, passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 169-173 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 206-211 (Nov. 26, 2014 aft., adjourned)

3 Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2014 (Quadri)

First Reading -- 22 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 89 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 165 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 173 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

4 Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014 (Campbell)

First Reading -- 22 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 89 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 165-167 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 174-175 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft.), 177-179 (Nov. 25, 2014 eve., passed)

5 Securities Amendment Act, 2014 (Campbell)

First Reading -- 22 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 89-90 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 167-168 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 173 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

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

First Reading -- 22-23 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 90-92 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 175 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 193-206 (Nov. 26, 2014 aft., adjourned)

7 Chartered Professional Accountants Act (McIver)

First Reading -- 159 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

8 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (Kennedy-Glans)

First Reading -- 159 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

201 Electric Utilities (Transparency in Billing) Amendment Act, 2014 (Anglin)

First Reading -- 86 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 125-128 (Nov. 24, 2014 aft., adjourned)

202 Safe and Inclusive Schools Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (Blakeman)

First Reading -- 86 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft., passed)

203 Safety Codes (Sustainable Structures) Amendment Act, 2014 (VanderBurg)

First Reading -- 192 (Nov. 26, 2014 aft., passed)

Table of Contents

Prayers	213
Introduction of Guests	213, 223
Members' Statements	
Mental Health	213
Bill 202	214
Century Farm and Ranch Awards	214
4-H Hall of Fame Inductee	214
Home Renovation Contractors	215
Rural Seniors' Lodges	215
Oral Question Period	
Oil and Gas Revenues	215
Long-term Care for Seniors	216
Feeder Association Loan Guarantee Program	216
Gay-straight Alliances in Schools	217
Long-term Care Beds	218
Oil and Gas Prices	218
Electricity Cogeneration	219
School Infrastructure Decision-making	219
Education Funding	220
Royal Alexandra Hospital Acute-care Tower	220
Environmental Monitoring	221
Seniors' Housing in Fort McMurray	221
X-ray Services in Vilna and Saddle Lake	222
Homelessness	222
Funding for Smaller Municipalities	223
Notices of Motions	223
Tabling Returns and Reports	224
Orders of the Day	224

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