



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 2, 2014

Issue 10a

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As we strive to do our best for the generations that will follow, let us be mindful of and reflect upon the accomplishments of those who came before us. Amen.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, you may recall me mentioning yesterday in the House that I would pay tribute to a former member of this Assembly who passed away earlier, in fact on November 24, 2014.

Mr. Henry Woo

March 18, 1929, to November 24, 2014

The Speaker: Mr. Henry Woo, March 18, 1929, to November 24, 2014, served two terms as the Member for Edmonton-Sherwood Park, from 1979 to 1986. Born in Lethbridge Mr. Woo had a varied career, including serving in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the RCMP. His background and unique mix of skills led him to become an executive assistant to various ministers in the Alberta government before his own election to this Assembly. With his interest in breaking down barriers between different communities and cultures, he played a critical role in the expansion of Alberta's trade with the Pacific Rim. He was invested as a member of the Order of Canada in 1990 and received the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012. During his terms of office Mr. Woo served on numerous committees, including the Select Standing Committee on Law and Regulations, on Private Bills, on Public Accounts, and on Public Affairs.

In a moment of silent prayer I would ask you to rise and please remember Mr. Woo as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have today two members of Mr. Woo's family. Allow me to introduce them, and after I have, I would ask you to join me in welcoming them. I would ask them to each remain standing as we pay tribute to them. Ms Sheri Woo is the daughter of former member Henry Woo. She is accompanied here today by her husband, Mr. Blair Stuparek, son-in-law of Mr. Woo. I would also like to reach out with this statement to Mr. Richard Woo, son of former member Henry Woo, who, unfortunately, was not able to join us today. We all know what our families do to help support us, and in this case we are so grateful to have two members of Mr. Woo's family, whom we know both gave him great support during the time they had together. Please join me in saying thank you.

Thank you so much, Sheri and Blair, for being here with us today. [applause]

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Let us begin with school groups, starting with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that our guests are actually in the gallery right now. They're from Maskwacis, in my constituency, 16 young people and their leaders. I would ask, in case they are within earshot, that my colleagues offer them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's give me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 27 bright young minds from Beacon Heights school. I just want to say that I had the pleasure of reading to this class during reading week in October, and the students loved – or at least it was my impression that they loved it – the story of Mouseland, that I read to them, and they asked very thought-provoking questions. Accompanying the students today are Ms Meryl Roberts, Mrs. Orianna Klotz, and three parents with the class: Shyla Masse, Catherine Roberts, and Kathy Owens. I'd now ask them and the students to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members 35 future leaders of Alberta and perhaps beyond who also happen to be exceptional students at Westbrook elementary school in Edmonton-Rutherford. These students are seated in both the members' gallery and the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise now and receive the very, very warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there other school groups?

If not, let us move on to other important visitors, starting with the Minister of Transportation. I understand you have two introductions. Proceed.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two very special women. The first is a bright young lady who was recently elected president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, Terri Beaupre. Terri got her start in politics volunteering for my constituency association in Grande Prairie-Wapiti, and I am so proud now to see her at the helm of the PC Party. I know she's going to do great things.

My second guest, Mr. Speaker, is my wife of 38 years, Sherry Drysdale. She is the reason I'm able to give so much of myself and my time serving Albertans. I'm always happy when I get an opportunity to publicly acknowledge her hard work and sacrifice, and I'm very proud to have her here today. Both of these amazing women are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: You have your second introduction, of course.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a member of my Alberta Transportation staff, Ryan Reichl, who is here today with colleagues from his work unit in the leadership development group. This group is involved in the work of the department and the government of Alberta's leadership program. Mr. Reichl organized this learning experience today so that he and his colleagues could better understand the business of the Legislature.

They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

1:40

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two very special guests from the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. This foundation was created by an act of parliament in 1984 and has since been actively working to improve Canada's relations with Asia through research, awareness-building, and business and policy networks. The Asia Advisory Council was very pleased that we were chosen to partner with them to host the very first national conference, Canada's Asia Challenge: Building Skills and Knowledge for the Next Generation, this past October in Calgary. We are joined today by Mr. Stewart Beck, former Canadian High Commissioner to India and recently appointed president and CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation, and also Mrs. Jill Price, VP of development and corporate affairs. They are both seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to please rise and receive the very warm welcome of this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my second introduction it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Mr. Munir Qazzaz, office manager in my constituency office. Previously Munir worked as a university professor and VP of community outreach at a university before immigrating to Canada. Munir has travelled up to Edmonton today to attend the winter 2014 constituency employee seminar and to be introduced in the House for the very first time. Joining him today is his wife, Hadeel, who's a community impact planner with the United Way of Calgary, who previously worked in international development for 15 years before coming to Canada. They are both seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Let us go to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Jeneroux: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to stand here today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Miss Grace Gong. Miss Grace Gong is a fourth-year human ecology student at the University of Alberta. I had the privilege of going and talking to her class. She says that she's not sure what she wants to do after her degree, but we're here to convince her to become an MLA. Please rise.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Joseph Schow, whose birthday is today. Joe Schow played basketball with my son Spenser. He played at the Canadian collegiate level, at the Canadian basketball level, and in the international scene. Mr. Schow is fluent in writing and speaking Russian. He is a political science scholar. Joe, could you please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly?

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the House two different introductions. The first is Dr. Donna Wilson, a renowned nurse-professor at the University of Alberta, a stellar candidate for us in the last by-election. She challenged the current Health minister and continues to challenge him in his place on health improvements.

The second introduction is Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop, no strangers to this Legislature. They've been here every year, Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, calling on this government, at their own expense, to institute basic constitutional rights for farm workers in this province. They initiated the trust fund for the most recent fatality in the Raymond area, Charles Stauffer. I would ask all three of them now to stand and have the warm welcome of the Legislature.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly a valuable member of our Wildrose team, and I would ask her to stand as I do so. We have Cadence Bergman and her mother, Cathy, with us today. Cadence is a wonderful person to be around. She represents both myself and the Member for Calgary-Shaw. We often ask her which one is most high maintenance, and as a testament to her character, knowing full well it's the Member for Calgary-Shaw, she never says anything to hurt his feelings. I would like to welcome them today. It's good to have you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a good friend, a community volunteer from Lethbridge, Ms Shilpa Stocker. Ms Stocker has been instrumental in helping us put together the Team Lethbridge event, that's happening again this spring for the third time, where a number of organizations from Lethbridge come up here and meet with the government and talk about the good things happening and some of the wonderful opportunities that present themselves in southern Alberta. I'd ask Shilpa to please stand up and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, I understand your guests are not here yet, so let us move on.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: We have two minutes each. Let us start with Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

Publication Ban on Deaths of Children in Care

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our history of Indian residential schools and the '60s scoop has traumatized aboriginal children and families for generations. This government has seen the impacts of this history in many forms. As an example, the number of aboriginal children in care is significantly higher than any other culture. A mantra I have and will continue to utter is that we need to do better to help families in need. I have heard from so many parents that their children were taken into care, and they don't understand why.

Thank you to the Ministry of Human Services for implementing several approaches that put communication and collaboration with families first. Thanks also for giving significantly more attention

to maintaining a child's connection to their own culture and their religious or spiritual beliefs.

Unfortunately, some children and youth, tragically, pass away while they're receiving child intervention services, and, Mr. Speaker, it's very sad. Parents have expressed to me that they have felt victimized by the past publication ban that was in place because it didn't allow them to talk about their children who died. I have personally witnessed the heartbreak families have had to endure as they felt they had to remain quiet when their children died in care. Some of these children were taken for reasons unexplained. I see how that really could place a horrible onus on families.

It makes my heart soar to see this government making efforts to respect families in their grieving. Mr. Speaker, I know the system is not perfect yet, but I am grateful for the changes made by the Ministry of Human Services to amend the publication ban so that the name and photograph of a deceased child may be published. I recognize that families who do not wish to have their child's name and photograph published may apply to the court for a ban.

I'm seeing a renewed focus on making sure families have the choice to speak publicly about their child or to seek privacy through a publication ban. The changes to the publication ban give control and choice back to the many aboriginal families who have been impacted and are still grappling with their losses. To me, this shows this government is committed to making sure that we bring dignity to families who are grieving the loss of a child.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Calgary-Hawkwood.

Official Opposition Energy Policy

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about the Wildrose energy policy and our commitment to defend and promote our energy sector. We believe at our core, just as Albertans do, that with the bounty of natural resources we've been blessed with, we have a duty to develop our energy in the most responsible and most environmentally sustainable way we can.

While you may not hear it nightly in the news, our industry is doing some fantastic and truly amazing work on environmental progress. Through Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance our oil sands are now sharing 777 technologies, that cost more than \$950 million to develop, to accelerate the pace of environmental improvement in Alberta's unconventional deposits.

The Wildrose believes in working with industry to implement bold, practical strategies to improve the quality of our air, water, and land, increase regulatory efficiencies, and grow markets for our products world-wide. Our moving Alberta forward policy this summer called to reduce tailings ponds. We believe government should act on this commitment by utilizing the tech fund and creating real incentives for those who do so. We believe government should tap into that wealth of knowledge along with other innovative, market-driven research companies and promote this research and development.

The Wildrose recognizes the importance of market access and the importance of getting our product to customers. Our leader this spring discussed our plan to create a natural resource right-of-way for future pipelines and other commercial activities. But while this is one of many ideas, we stand behind the current plans, including Keystone, Northern Gateway, and the Energy East pipelines. Our policy is positive, bold, and innovative. It will help Alberta secure a

dynamic and prosperous economy for generations to come, and I am proud to stand behind it.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's 1:50 p.m. We'll start. Please be reminded: 35 seconds maximum for the question and 35 seconds maximum for the answer.

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

Resource Revenue Projections

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Finance minister about the fiscal update in light of Alberta's changing oil prices. He told this Assembly that he was sticking by the numbers in the fiscal update and that he fully expects to deliver the phony surplus that he promised. Setting aside the fact that the surplus isn't actually a surplus – they're taking out over \$2 billion more in debt – is the Finance minister really telling us that oil prices in the 60s are going to have no impact on the projections from last week's fiscal update?

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, we don't budget oil on a daily basis. Prices are down right now, but we're quite confident that at the end of this fiscal year we'll be running a surplus. Stay tuned.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday the Finance minister's fiscal update pegged oil at a \$75 average between now and April. Two days later the Premier issued a revision, saying that oil will be between \$65 and \$75 a barrel for the rest of the fiscal year – note, Finance minister, that that does not mean a \$75 average – yet yesterday the Finance minister said that \$75 was a prudent number to budget on. To the Finance minister: why is he building his fiscal outlook on an oil price that the Premier has already said is wrong?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Premier never said that the oil price was wrong. At the time I gave the second-quarter update, oil was at \$75. When the Premier gave his speech on Friday, it was down to \$65. As the Premier has said and I've said, predicting oil is a mug's game. I'll leave that to the opposition.

Ms Smith: Quite a change in 48 hours, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know that this government is no stranger to wasting a few hundred million here and a billion dollars there, but a \$5 difference in the average oil price over a year has a \$1 billion discrepancy and impact on this government's revenues. The discrepancy between the Premier and the Finance minister could be as high as \$500 million for the remainder of this year. The Premier has said that the Finance minister's revenue projections are wrong. When will the Finance minister be doing a prudent fiscal update to correct his phony fiscal update from last Wednesday?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we gave the second-quarter update. Those are the numbers that we had for the second quarter. I've been very clear that we're going to make sure that we reduce our spending. We're going to be very fiscally responsible

with every dollar we have from taxpayers, and we'll continue to make sure that this government runs in the black from an operating viewpoint.

The Speaker: Second main set of questions.

Health Facilities

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the stories of crumbling health facilities in Alberta continue to roll in: ant colonies in the walls in Sundre, frozen and ruptured water lines in Cardston, falling chunks of concrete in the surgical department in Brooks, and on and on it goes. This is Alberta. We are the wealthiest province in Canada, and this government can't even keep our hospitals from falling apart. This is the PC record of misplaced priorities and politicized health care spending. To the Health minister: what does he say for this sorry legacy?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, first of all, our hospitals have an outstanding record of maintaining the highest quality of health in this country. Accreditation: we are the top in this country. Mortality in Alberta hospitals is among the lowest of all 10 provinces. We deliver outstanding service. We'll continue to do that, whether it's in rural or urban.

Thank you.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think the Health minister should be reading the newspapers lately.

This government has proven time and again that it's excellent at putting out press releases and cutting ribbons. When it comes to getting headlines, there's no one better, but when it comes to getting results, there's no one worse. Our wait times keep getting longer, and our hospitals, once the ribbons are cut, are understaffed, neglected, and fall into disrepair. To the Health minister: does he need to be reminded that it's not only his job to make sure that we have hospitals but to make sure that they actually function as well?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to making sure our hospitals are maintained properly and operate properly. Since 2009 we've spent \$283 million on operating maintenance. We've spent about \$220 million over the next three-year period on capital maintenance. We have a substantial budget. We work with all the hospitals to try to make sure we deliver the best quality health care in this country, and I think it's proven time and time again when you talk to the citizens of this wonderful province.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think I know the problem. There are no commemorative plaques for fixing a broken pipe. You don't get a front-page local newspaper story for repairing a cracked floor, and new boilers don't come with ribbon cuttings. Maybe that's the real problem here. There is no incentive on that side to actually do any of these things because there's no political reward for them. So let's try to fix that. Would the Health minister please tell us how he would like to be recognized for doing routine hospital maintenance so that this work actually gets done?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. You know, this government is committed to making sure people have access to the ongoing support of our health care system. We don't need to have plaques in order to get recognition. We get it daily from our citizens when we deliver the kind of health care

they expect day in and day out. We have the best in this country. We'll stand behind that.

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

Health Facility Infrastructure

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That leads me into this question. Today Public Accounts heard from Alberta Health professionals on the deteriorating state of core health infrastructure, and the warnings should not be ignored. The president of the AMA has said that deteriorating hospitals are really killing the system while the president-elect told the committee that "access is foundational to safety, and access is dependent on infrastructure, so therefore infrastructure drives safety." Minister, if infrastructure drives safety and you've ignored the infrastructure, it means you're ignoring the safety needs of patients and staff, and quite frankly that is unacceptable.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, our Alberta hospitals are outstanding in the care they give to Albertans. Patient safety is number one. Our record with infections is probably with some of the best in this country. We will continue to have the most accredited hospitals. Also, you know, on issues like mortality rate and infection rate we are some of the best in this country. We will continue to deliver services at an outstanding level.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about the incredible health care professionals; we're talking about the lack of infrastructure.

Minister, the head of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta described rural Alberta hospitals as crumbling. There are reports of insect infestation, ceilings caving in, failing elevators, and leaks that have gone ignored for nine months. The doctors, the nurses, and patients are telling you this is a problem. We have been telling you that for years. So let's do this, Minister: ignore us as the opposition, but let's listen to the doctors and the nurses.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I have been out in rural Alberta and throughout many of the urban cities, talked to doctors. Yes, there's some frustration. I've not heard that story, but we'll let that story stay over there.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I'll provide the story through a FOIP.

This government, your government, has done review after review after review. In fact, there are now three different lists of the repair work that needs to be done in hospitals. One is kept by Alberta Infrastructure, one is kept by Alberta Health Services, and the third party is inspectors contracted by the government. Now, we have three different lists and three different estimates ranging up to a billion dollars, and I can see why you're overwhelmed. So I'm going to make a suggestion to you, Minister: pick a list, prioritize the project, make it public, and get it done.

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we have allowed Alberta Health Services to do the delivery of those repairs. We're spending \$225 million now. We've spent an additional \$283 million since 2008. The repairs in our hospitals are moving ahead, maybe not as quick as everybody would like, but it's a big province. We need to make

sure we prioritize things, and that's done through Alberta Health Services in co-operation with Alberta Infrastructure.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the nurses, doctors, and the health staff of this province are the best in the country, and they're operating under very difficult circumstances. Not too long ago our new Health minister was outraged as the mayor of Edmonton about the city's infrastructure challenges and potholes. He criticized the PC government for cutting funding and not keeping its commitments. Nonetheless, he forged ahead. As mayor he oversaw a budget of about \$2 billion. Now as Health minister he's got an \$18 billion budget, which is nine times greater. To the Health minister: why are you not outraged and using every means possible to fix Alberta's crumbling health infrastructure?

2:00

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, this government is committed, as I've said before, to spending a tremendous amount of money to ensure this infrastructure works. We're going through a budgetary process. We'll discuss and look at what we can do. We'll make sure that we can do as much as possible. It is a problem that we understand, and we'll make sure that we move ahead finding solutions.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, it's not a problem; it's a crisis. According to an *Edmonton Journal* story Alberta's broken hospitals are as follows. Sturgeon hospital in St. Albert: the roof is leaking into the nursery of newborn children. Rockyview in Calgary: water leaks and moisture is causing noncompliance with infection control standards. Lamont hospital: lower air quality and ventilation. Lloydminster hospital: lead, X-ray, and radioactive contamination. Not to mention the millions of dollars needed to fix the litany of problems at the Foothills, Royal Alex, Misericordia, and other hospitals. To the Health minister. You were upset about potholes. How do you think Albertans feel about having to suffer to get care under these conditions?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member is confused between fixing a pothole and making sure people get proper health care. This province continues to give proper health care, outstanding care, the best in this country. Talk to people in this province. They're getting that care. They all say the same thing, that they really understand the importance of this system, how well we do in delivering the health care through our doctors and nurses.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, I think this minister is confused. He's outraged over potholes, but he's not outraged over the state of our health facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Health minister knows a thing or two about big development projects. It's important to buy bulk, set a budget, and get shovels into the ground as soon as possible to get the best value. I know he would not propose fixing a large complex by renovating one balcony or one unit at a time, but that's exactly what he's trying to sell to Albertans about our deferred maintenance crisis. Will the Health minister use the \$1 billion in federal health transfers to make a massive investment into fixing our broken health care infrastructure? If not, why not?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we will invest as is necessary in our health care system. If you look throughout this province, we've built unending numbers of hospitals, fixed unending numbers of hospitals, built unending numbers of long-term care and continuing care facilities. This government is committed to making sure Albertans are treated properly, with respect, and making sure they get the kind of care they expect.

Health Facility Infrastructure in Edmonton

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, yet an unending amount still needs to be done. Today the NDP released documents from AHS outlining the current state of health care infrastructure around Edmonton. They used three categories, the worst of which is the red zone, which means the problems are severe enough to negatively impact operations and/or elevate risk so that immediate action is required. In the Edmonton area five emergency rooms are in the red zone as are surgical facilities at the Mis, the Alex, and part of the U of A. To the Minister of Health: how could your government let this happen?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, in co-operation with Alberta Health Services we've been looking at how to do different things in our emergency care facilities. We're working with the Royal Alex, University of Alberta to put in transition beds and trying find more innovative ways to ensure that our citizens who go into emergency will be taken care of. This is an issue. We appreciate that, and we're working through it as we see the issues arise.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the section on surgical facilities describes significant capacity pressures at the Alex, which cause an "inability to meet the demand for service in a timely and efficient manner" in cancer surgery and the ophthalmology clinic. To be clear, this means that patient care is compromised by infrastructure neglect. To the minister. This happened on your government's watch. What do you have to say to those Albertans who aren't receiving the care they deserve because of your government's failure?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, this government is making every effort to ensure that people who are in need of surgery get that surgery. For those who are prioritized within the system quickly, we make every effort to ensure that they do it safely, effectively, and with great speed.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the report also says that the relatively new northeast Edmonton health clinic was designed to see 25,000 ER patients and instead is seeing over 50,000, causing many, many problems. To the Health minister. This problem didn't arise yesterday; it's the product of decades of neglect. Why won't your government come clean with Albertans and take responsibility for its long-standing and repeated failure to ensure that all Albertans have access to appropriate health care?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question. You know, this province and this city are growing exponentially, and a lot of people are moving to the northeast end of the city of Edmonton, so it is a challenge. We realize that. We have great doctors, great support systems up there, and we'll continue to support them. The reality is that as our province is growing so much, we need to invest. We are investing, and we'll continue to do that, but it can't be done overnight.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Edmonton-Riverview.

Health Facility Infrastructure Capital Planning

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's second release of the damning *Edmonton Journal* report is exposing how years of PC political manipulation in infrastructure has resulted in crumbling

hospital facilities across the province. Yesterday the Infrastructure minister said, “Guess who makes the decisions on those projects. It’s Alberta Health Services.” However, this report explicitly states that the government regularly ignores AHS funding recommendations. Last year only 1 out of 10 recommended projects was granted funding. Which story is true, Mr. Minister? Why aren’t you being straightforward?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, I’m glad members of this Assembly are finally paying attention to an issue that the Premier actually has outlined in the Speech from the Throne as being something that he deems to be a priority. It will be something that we have a measured and a precise plan for to address the infrastructure backlog in our province. I would ask the members to support our upcoming budget to make sure that happens.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, we’re facing over a billion dollars in deferred maintenance, and this government is failing to publish and stick to its priorities. Considering the *Journal* report shows that two-thirds of Alberta hospitals are at least 30 years old and needing major maintenance upgrades and given that this government’s priorities change dramatically from one year to the next, can the minister enlighten us as to what specific priorities will be brought forward next year, or will he continue to shift projects with no predictable justification?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, this province has one of the most robust capital plans in the country, so the members opposite are more than welcome to take a look at the capital plan, to have a look at which projects are on there. With respect to maintenance funding, this is where they’re getting a bit confused. Maintenance funding decisions are made by Alberta Health Services to address the most imminent needs they see for patients.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, well, the news just gets worse in today’s second installment of the *Journal* investigation, which details issues such as insect infestations, burst pipes, and corroded sewer lines. To the minister again: since this report explicitly states that you’ve allowed maintenance issues to surpass your government’s ability to keep up with them and given you’ve shown no sign of curbing the disturbing political trends that got us in this mess in the first place, what is your precise strategy in these tough economic times to address deferred infrastructure maintenance in Alberta’s hospitals?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, we’ve got roughly 100 hospitals in the province of Alberta. That’s a very significant number. At present we have about 265 different maintenance projects that are going on in every corner of this province: in Bassano, in Medicine Hat, in Pincher Creek, in Raymond, in the Crowsnest Pass. We have projects going on across this province, 265 maintenance projects, to ensure that Albertans are safe and looked after.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Calgary-Shaw. Edmonton-Riverview. [interjections]

Fraser Institute Report on Economic Freedom

Mr. Young: I’m glad I could build the anticipation. Wait for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Fraser Institute released its report on economic freedom in North America today. Can the Minister of Finance detail for the House what this report concludes about

Alberta’s economic freedom beyond an index number of 8.2? What does this mean to Albertans in terms of where we need to go?

2:10

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is pretty riveting stuff, and I hope the opposition listens. The report was very clear that Alberta ranks number one for economic freedom in Canada. Also, Alberta has the second-smallest government on a per capita basis in Canada, and overall we’re the lowest taxed jurisdiction. Combine that with the highest wage earners: Alberta has a significant competitive advantage over other jurisdictions. [interjections]

Mr. Young: Also to the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance: given that this report shows other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan are making notable gains on economic freedom, what measures is this government taking to ensure that Alberta continues to pursue economic growth and not rest on the status quo? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, let’s just give the floor to whoever has it, and we’ll get through this together.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our economy continues to grow at a high rate. As a matter of fact, our GDP is still forecast to expand by 3.8 per cent for 2014, which is outpacing the national average. Our government has been clear that we will not introduce a sales tax and that we will maintain our low tax advantage. On Thursday I’m meeting with chief economists from across the country to get their insights into Alberta’s economy as we work towards Budget 2015-16. But let me be very clear that we will be very prudent and very responsible with our fiscal decisions moving forward.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Young: Thank you. Can the Minister of Energy tell us how this economic freedom measure translates into something more tangible, like getting pipelines built and more to markets and keeping our economy competitive?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Market access is indeed important to us. Yesterday our Premier was in Vancouver talking to the Vancouver Board of Trade. Today he met with Premier Couillard in Quebec, tomorrow with Premier Wynne. On Thursday he meets with Governor Christie. We’ve got Rob Merrifield working in Washington, in Ottawa, Jay Hill working in west. We’ve got Ron Hoffman working overseas. [interjections] I can assure this House that we have the highest per capita number of people working on pipeline access in this country.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I’d like some order, and I’m sure other members would here as well. So, please, enough is enough already, okay?

Let’s move on.

School Modular Construction Prioritization

Mr. Wilson: Time for some real questions, Mr. Speaker. I am blessed to represent a constituency that is full of great people. They are selfless and understand the growth pressures that this province is under. They expect people to play by the rules, and

integrity is a guiding principle. This is why when a school in the Minister of Education's constituency was allotted modular classrooms before MidSun school in my constituency was, despite MidSun being higher on the CBE priority list, many legitimate questions were raised. The CBE uses publicly available, objective criteria to determine need. Minister, what criteria do you use?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the past two years we've approved more than 230 modulars province-wide. When we add in the emergent units that were announced in the past couple of months, the number is over 300, allowing us to accommodate more than 7,500 children. The Calgary board of education's requests for modulars have been received as have other school board jurisdictions' across the province. We respond to those, taking a close look at what criteria we believe to be in the best interests of moving education forward in each one of those schools.

Mr. Wilson: The front bench is making us proud today, Mr. Speaker.

Given this minister was asked the same question by the Leader of the Official Opposition on November 19 and she was told in response that he had received some letters and that he was responding to what parents are saying are priorities for their children, what does the minister have to say to the parents and families of MidSun and the five other schools who penned letter after letter asking for new modulars for their kids?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously every request which comes to us from school boards. When parents make their requests known to us, we respond to those, looking at them very carefully, seeing what criteria should be considered when we make decisions about where the modulars are going to go each year. We've done that this year. We'll continue to do that in the years to come.

Mr. Wilson: Minister, why won't you just stand in this House and admit that what you did was wrong? Let me put it in plain language so the minister understands, Mr. Speaker. MidSun and five other schools were higher on the CBE's priority list based on objective criteria, yet you chose funding for the modulars in your constituency first. To the Minister of Education: Will MidSun and these schools have their modulars before William Reid, and if not, why not?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, modulars are looked at in a variety of ways across the province. The schools which have been approved here in Calgary had the highest utilization rates of any of the schools that were being considered. We're going to continue to ensure that we are responding to modular requests in as timely a manner as we can, taking into consideration the most important criterion, which is: what can we do to improve education for children in all of our schools?

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

Seniors' Housing Placements

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Families often move relatives from one continuing care facility to another so that they may be closer to their relatives. This can be an emotional and trying time for the family involved. However, this process becomes even more difficult than is necessary because of a lack of clarity surrounding

the policy for transferring seniors from one facility to another. My first question is to the Minister of Health. My constituents in Sherwood Park want to know why this government will not consider a family's second, third, or even fourth choice for a continuing care facility if the first choice is not available?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. Actually, we do that. I'm happy to clarify that. AHS does try to place each patient in a facility that the patient or family chooses, but I want to be clear that we need every bed in the hospitals. AHS needs to work with families to move patients in facilities as close as possible but not always their first choice. You know, 23,000 people a day are living in supportive housing or long-term care as well as another 25,000 per day in continuing care. We're really very busy, busy, and we will do all we can.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Olesen: Thank you. To the same minister: given that there is so much confusion surrounding this policy, what is being done to bring clarity to families with loved ones in continuing care who wish to bring their relatives closer to home?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, AHS spends the time necessary to meet with and talk to the patients' families and explain to them the issues and what we can do for them. They also assign a case manager to continue to work with the patients and their families to move them closer to home if that's what they want. It's also important to qualify that there's no hundred-kilometre rule – that does not exist – or any distance. AHS just works to deliver the best health care possible and the best service anybody can have.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Olesen: Thank you. To the Minister of Seniors: given that nonsubsidized seniors' housing is much easier to get into but unaffordable for the majority of seniors, what commitments can you make to my constituents of Sherwood Park to assure them that their parents and grandparents will be able to find affordable housing in close proximity to their families?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for being such a strong advocate for seniors in her constituency. [interjections] I can see that the Official Opposition agrees with me on that point.

Our premier has this government committed to helping provide seniors with a variety of housing options, strategies, and programs close to home, Mr. Speaker, including affordable housing, because we know that there's no one size fits all. So to do this, we need to work with our municipal counterparts, our developers, our faith-based groups, and our housing management bodies and empower them with the tools that they need. Through the commitment of this Premier and the investments and announcements that you've seen recently, we are working on just that.

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

CNRL Environmental Performance

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the last five years Canadian Natural Resources Limited, CNRL, has had 978 releases in Alberta. These are releases which polluted our air, water, or land, from brackish water to fracking fluid, to ammonia, to crude oil. So far this week CNRL's Red Earth Creek operation has spilled 60,000 litres of crude oil, and in April they spilled 70,000 litres of oil and water northwest of Slave Lake. To the minister of the environment: why does this government continue to allow CNRL to operate in Alberta? They are the single worst polluter in all of Alberta by a long shot.

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is unfathomable. CNRL provides a whole heck of a lot of economic activity and jobs for Albertans, pays a whole heck of a lot of royalties and income tax to the province so that we can deliver core services like education and health care, that the citizens of Alberta demand.

2:20

Ms Blakeman: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Minister.

Now, given that CNRL has had 978 releases but hundreds more violations for not reporting, failure to disclose, failure to test, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, how many financial penalties have been assessed to this company?

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that as we work with industry to make sure that we have the economic activity in this province that Albertans are very proud of, we also balance that with environmental protection. We have our integrated resource management system in place, which we are working on implementing. A big part of that is the Alberta Energy Regulator, who is the independent, arm's-length body that assesses and enforces the regulations that we have in place, which are some of the strongest around the world.

Ms Blakeman: No. No, that is just not true.

Back to the same minister: how long is this government willing to allow CNRL to write off the cost of any penalties or fines, the cost of pollution in other words, as tax deductible against their profits?

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, we're always striving in this province to improve our environmental performance. You know, there are some businesses and some companies that need to do a better job, and we will challenge them to do so. We will work with our researchers, our innovators in this province, and our postsecondary institutions to make sure that we continue to push the envelope on environmental performance, and we do. We must do better. Albertans expect it. Our customers expect it.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's postsecondary institutions have suffered from drastic cuts because of this PC government for years. During his leadership campaign the current Premier promised to restore the funding cuts to Alberta's postsecondary institutions. Now the minister of advanced education seems to be backtracking on this promise. Will he tell us why he's telling Alberta students to expect cuts when the Premier promised to restore funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can tell you is that no final budget decisions have been made. What I can further tell you is that Alberta invests in our postsecondary students. Our latest

numbers show that Alberta has the third-highest expenditures for full-time students in the country. Campus Alberta is a priority for our government. We invest \$2.1 billion in base operating grants across Campus Alberta. The Premier has made it clear that we are committed to sound, conservative fiscal principles, and that's exactly what we're going to deliver.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if that was a yes or a no.

Given that the former Premier promised to increase funding to postsecondary but instead cut \$147 million and given that the current Premier promised to restore the remaining \$64.5 million, to the same minister, and I'll put this very simply for you: is your PC government going to keep this promise, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can tell you is that no final decisions have been made on the budget. I have been directed by our Premier to come up with a plan for long-term, stable, and predictable funding, and that is exactly what we're going to deliver. I can also tell you that we're going to be working with our institutions to deliver one of the best postsecondary educations in Canada, and that's what we're going to deliver.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta is the fastest growing province with the greatest need for doctors, teachers, and professionals and given that this PC government continuously undercuts the funding needed to train those doctors, nurses, and professionals, to the same minister: don't you understand that investing in Alberta's postsecondary education is key to maintaining Alberta's prosperity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can tell you, as I said earlier, is that we do invest in our system. We invested \$2.1 billion across our postsecondary system. We also provide access to postsecondary students. We provide \$234 million in grants, scholarships, and bursaries across our system. We also created a loan system that provides \$408 million in access to our postsecondary students. We believe in our postsecondary system, and we're investing in it.

Calgary Regional Partnership

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Regional Partnership claims to be a voluntary organization committed to facilitating regional co-operation. However, this organization is now pressuring the provincial government to legislatively force communities like Airdrie and Rocky View to submit to the CRP growth plan, essentially stripping communities like Airdrie of their local autonomy on issues, including housing density and economic development. To the minister: will the government agree to not legislatively force Airdrie or any other community to join or remain in the CRP against its wishes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a good question. We really believe that we need to have regional planning throughout the province, in Calgary as well as in the greater Calgary area, but we also believe in municipal autonomy. We agree with regional planning but managed locally, and we support

municipalities to work together. We do that both financially and with other tools so that they can continue to grow together.

Mr. Anderson: Well, that brings up an interesting point. Minister, there have also been reports that CRP members are threatening communities like Airdrie that their water and waste-water agreements will not be respected or renewed if they don't agree to join and remain with the CRP. In my view, this is extortion. It's un-Albertan, and frankly I find it very disturbing. Will this government commit to protecting the citizens of Airdrie and those in other communities so that under no circumstances will a municipality's decision to leave the CRP have any effect on their access to water or waste-water treatment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we certainly respect Airdrie's mayor, Mayor Brown, and other mayors and municipalities in the area and their municipal autonomy. We support them as they do their regional partnerships and intermunicipal co-operation. We do that in lots of different ways, and we do it, certainly, with \$48.5 million in Alberta community partnerships. Many of the communities in the Calgary regional area have been part of the partnership and part of the Calgary metropolitan plan, and we work with them where they can provide services together.

Mr. Anderson: We need more clarity on that. It should be a voluntary organization, Minister.

Minister, there are also very credible reports that many CRP senior staff and executives are making outrageously high salaries and benefits and that they are attempting to stifle disclosure of these salaries by forcing elected members of the CRP to sign confidentiality agreements. Will the minister agree to ensure that the salaries and benefits of CRP management are publicly disclosed so that we can all make informed decisions in this House on whether this is an organization that's worth continued funding or whether it's a growing layer of unnecessary bureaucracy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We supply \$3.5 million to the Calgary Regional Partnership. They are doing good work. If you look at the Calgary metropolitan plan, they've come together in all of those regions, and they have done good work with that. We do, as I say for the third time, support municipal autonomy as well, but we want them to be able to work and plan together. They've come up with a great metropolitan plan. We will continue to work with them and communities in the greater Calgary region.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Feeder Association Loan Guarantee Program

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For 77 years the feeder association loan guarantee program has helped cattle feeders purchase calves. Through the program the Feeder Associations provides financing to the feeders, and the government provides the loan guarantees to the Feeder Associations. My question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Back on November 19 I raised the issue of an increase in government loan guarantees so that cattle feeders could access more cattle. Can you tell me: has there been any progress on this file?

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

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for the question. As you know, this question has been asked of me several times in the past weeks. This is a very important program, as I've indicated. I haven't changed my position in terms of extending or expanding the guarantee. I have also, in answering the question, though, said that there are other options, and we're continually looking at options. We have pointed out to the Feeder Associations that there is an existing program with AFSC, and it's called the specific loan guarantee program. We've invited them to talk to AFSC about that program.

Mr. Donovan: To the same minister: why can we not just increase the cap?

Mr. Olson: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of good reasons for not increasing the cap, and one is that it expands our liability. This is a guarantee, which gives the potential for some great losses. Now, it's been a very, very successful program. I will acknowledge that. However, I would suggest that we need to be more strategic in terms of expanding programs like this. We're doing a lot of policy work in this area right now, but in the meantime this is an existing program. It's also more commercial, and I would suggest that at a time of a very buoyant industry they should be involved in commercial deals.

2:30

Mr. Donovan: My final question is to the same minister. When can we expect something to be implemented here for a long-term solution for agricultural producers?

Mr. Olson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the immediate concern is what's going to happen today because we're in the middle of the fall calf run. This is something that needs to happen quite quickly, and the AFSC is available. They can take applications even today. It's an existing program, as I say. In terms of longer term, we continue to do work on that. I would just suggest that the member stay tuned.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Lyme Disease

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our spring session I asked a question to the past Health minister on Lyme disease, where I addressed the chronic lack of support Alberta Health Services provides to Albertans with this serious disease. Now, with seemingly no progress on the file I am hoping that with a new Health minister there might be some real progress. Again, Lyme disease is a tick-borne disease and when left untreated has serious long-term health effects. Is this minister aware of this problem, and what is he going to do to ensure Albertans have access to testing and treatment?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, in 2014 six Albertans were diagnosed with Lyme disease, and there were 41 cases in the last four years. All cases required travelling out of the province to areas where the bacteria is known to circulate. There is an issue with the test. There are two tests, one that gives a positive/negative and one that can be more reliable. I think that we should look at the second one, which will give people far more comfort. As we move forward, I think it's important to do the proper testing.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll look forward to those results.

Given that many of my constituents and Albertans have had first-hand experience with this disease and dealing with AHS, two things have become evident. Doctors in Alberta are either not trained in detecting this condition or are outright refusing to test for Lyme disease, forcing Albertans to pay out of pocket and travel out of country for costly treatments with no possibility of reimbursement. Does the minister acknowledge that this is happening, and what progress has been made on this file since my last question?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, Lyme disease can be effectively and completely treated with antibiotics if the disease is caught in the early stages, and that's why the testing is so important. Alberta recommends that physicians consult with an infectious disease specialist if they're available – I hope they are, and I'm sure they are – to determine the best treatment options for an individual. We encourage consultation.

Mr. Rowe: This is not a laughing matter, minister. It's far, far from that.

Given that in Ontario and other governments, both federally and provincially, are already developing broad-based strategies to deal with this problem, to the new Health minister: when can we expect this government to follow suit and develop a provincial-wide strategy?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we will take every step we can in order to look at what we can do to ensure that those who have Lyme disease are taken care of. We can't promise a provincial-wide strategy, especially in light of that there's not that many cases. What we can do, though, is encourage that when people are tested, they are tested with the test that is the most effective.

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

Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year about 100,000 people move to Alberta to find work because we are leading the country in job creation. However, certain groups of Albertans are not benefiting and are facing huge challenges in finding work. This includes a good number of my constituents in Edmonton-Mill Woods, who have disabilities and want to work, but they cannot find any jobs. They are among many Albertans who have a disability and are struggling to find employment. My question to the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities: the government claims to support all Albertans to live fulfilling lives, but exactly what is your ministry doing to support those individuals who cannot otherwise participate in a level market?

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

Mr. Bhardwaj: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to supporting all Albertans with disabilities to live fulfilling and meaningful lives. We firmly believe that if you're willing to work and you're able to work, you must have the opportunity to work. People with disabilities have a range of skills, and they are the best and the most loyal employees you will ever find. There are many, many employers right across our province who recognize that, and they're hiring people with

disabilities on their strengths because they're contributing to their bottom line.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again. My constituents of Edmonton-Mill Woods with disabilities who are looking for jobs are running into a barrier in finding employment. Why is your ministry not helping those Albertans to overcome those hurdles, Mr. Minister?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of misconceptions out there when you're hiring people with disabilities. As I alluded to in my previous answer, they're the most loyal and the best employees you'll ever find. We're working on that through various different channels. We have an employer advisory council, both a private-sector and a public-sector advisory council to create awareness, to talk to various employers. Of course, there are many, many employers who are currently working on that to hire people, and of course we're leading by example by hiring 20 internship positions in Human Services.

The Speaker: Hon. member, second supplemental.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Edmonton-Mill Woods have concerns about the lack of workplace support for people with disabilities. Will the associate minister admit that the current investments are simply not enough?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of different initiatives that we're taking as a government to reduce that gap or to bridge that gap. We launched back in May an employment-first innovation fund, which is to look at different ways to include people with disabilities. Of course, there are programs called DRES, disability-related employment supports, which are out there. But we can always do more to employ people. We can always do more to create awareness because, as I said earlier, they are the best people, the best employees, and the business cases are out there to prove that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Southern Alberta Highway Construction and Repair

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Winter driving conditions can be very hazardous, as we've recently seen, between Edmonton and Innisfail. Plowing and sanding crews for all the highways, county roads, and within our cities and towns have been working long hours as have tow truck operators and police personnel. Sadly, some have been injured.

Some situations are accidents waiting to happen, like highway 36 south of Taber – and I'll be tabling these pictures – where the road is actually breaking away and sliding off into the coulee and reservoir. Will the Minister of Transportation please tell us when this often-patched section will receive a safe, permanent repair instead of more Band-Aids?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. You know, we have areas of this province where there's slumping on riverbanks all over the place. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to stop Mother Nature before. This is one of those areas where there's going to be slumping.

Last year we added an additional lane on highway 36 at this location, but, you know, there still seem to be issues with the pavement. We'll be working to rectify that situation, and we'll continue to monitor it because I know it'll never go away. We'll always have to monitor it and make repairs as necessary.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you. I promise to keep reminding you.

Given that this provincial government continues trying to balance its budget through disrespect and disregard for local levels as a government by downloading responsibilities for bridges and secondary highways onto counties and MDs, will the Minister of Transportation please tell us when the funding required to do this job properly will be forthcoming?

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the section that we're talking about – you know, we recently repaved that section and subsequently transferred it to the municipality in exchange for a gravel road, that the hon. member mentioned. Alberta Transportation does have plans to pave this road once the budget allows us to do that.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last year the province rerouted secondary highway 845 south over a busy town of Raymond gravel road to connect directly with highway 52, will the minister please tell us when the promise to upgrade and pave will occur as well as the status of the work scheduled on highway 505?

2:40

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, that section that he mentioned, we do plan to pave it, but, as we know, the price of oil – we have budget restrictions.

You know, as far as 505, I know how important that is to agricultural producers to be able to move their crops to market in the fall and to get their work done in the spring. But I'm pleased to tell this House that this portion of 505 is being currently designed, and it's expected to be tendered this spring for construction in '15-16.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The time for Oral Question Period has expired.

We'll move back to Members' Statements, two minutes each, starting with Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Members' Statements (continued)

Aging in Place Fair in Calgary

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose several times in the House advocating for seniors' needs, in particular the aging-in-place initiative, which strives to meet the needs of seniors as they remain within or near their familiar community. On October 4, 2014, my constituency held an event called Aging in Place: A Family Affair. It showcased medical and social services such as in-home X-ray, snow shovelling, lawn cutting, assisted shopping,

and so forth. It also provided the opportunity for seniors to speak about their desire for special housing needs such as independent living, assisted living, and long-term care.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, a continuum of services, from soft services to infrastructure support, is what seniors need. The fair attracted over 800 people, including 40 agencies, who provided a resource fair. It was such a great success as a result of collaboration among community residents, community associations, senior-serving agencies, and different orders of government, provincial and municipal. It reminded us as an order of government that when we work together collaboratively, magic happens. By facilitating public engagement, we helped bring the community together and created a sense of ownership and pride, when local solutions were created meeting people's needs.

Mr. Speaker, the work has just begun, and we have a long way to go. With the new Ministry of Seniors being created under the Premier's new management, I look forward to working closely with hon. minister to make sure our next year's aging-in-place fair is another success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Albertans witnessed a parliamentary low point demonstrated by the PCs, when they used procedural trickery to stifle the introduction of Bill 202 in this House, not, frankly, that there is much to debate because gay-straight alliances save lives. Full stop. Now, that fact doesn't seem to mean much to the members opposite, who have chosen to scuttle a bill that enshrines students' rights to form GSAs in favour of a bill that pits students against their schools and their school boards.

So for their benefit I'm going to share again the message we received from a student who tried to set up a GSA and couldn't. That student told us, "After a friend tried to start a GSA in my school and was shut down by our school board, I vowed to start one myself, but after having a conversation with the school board trustee, I learned that it just wasn't going to be possible. I was in my final year of high school, and exams were coming up, so it seemed like an impossible fight that I just wasn't able to raise."

Mr. Speaker, it seemed like an impossible fight. That's what this student says. This is exactly the situation that Bill 10 will make the rule, not the exception, and it's not only the students who are fighting this fight. Yesterday I heard from a teacher who told me about a student who had been engaging in self-harm as they were in the process of coming out. In support of that student the teacher offered to lead the formation of a GSA at the school. Within hours she was informed that parents wanted her fired. Her principal told her that her board's position was that GSAs were exclusionary and therefore prohibited at the school.

Mr. Speaker, the board was wrong. GSAs are a voluntary opportunity for youth to come together in a welcoming, inclusive space free from prejudice and discrimination. They are in many ways a lifeboat for some of our most at-risk children, a lifeboat that this PC government is denying to the students who need it most. Is this your government . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Let us move on to Calgary-Varsity, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

2014 Grey Cup Champions

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Sunday the Calgary Stampeders won the 102nd Grey Cup in Vancouver. I certainly don't want to compromise the decorum of our Legislature, but for many Albertans this is something to stand up and yahoo about.

Calgary deserved this Grey Cup. Coach Hufnagel's boys started strong against the Hamilton Ticats, and our quarterback Bo Levi Mitchell gave Calgary an early lead. But the game turned into a nail-biter, Mr. Speaker. A 45-yard Hamilton touchdown closed the gap to 17 to 7 at halftime. There were so many plays that could have taken the game to a different outcome, including a late touchdown by the Tiger-Cats that was called back because of a penalty. Fans had to try and remember to breathe.

Mr. Speaker, I'm the mother of three sons. Besides having a place in heaven, in this life I have a basement full of sports equipment: hockey pads, basketball shoes, and much-beloved football equipment. The experience of standing alongside my sons and husband and the other 52,056 fans at B.C. Place this past Sunday afternoon, cheering for our team in the Grey Cup, was an experience beyond my wildest dreams.

The home of the Stampeders, McMahon Stadium, is situated in the Calgary-Varsity constituency. Yes, Vancouver's B.C. Place, retractable roof and all, dwarfs our stadium, but out of that little stadium in Calgary has emerged a team triumphant, the 2014 Grey Cup winners.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians' willingness to endure winter storms and travel delays, trekking from football cities across our great country, to come together every year to watch the CFL Grey Cup is undisputed evidence of our hardiness as a people and of our oneness as a nation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Calgary-Varsity did seek special permission to wear the Calgary hat. I granted it, as I have done on a couple of other occasions. I will watch this carefully as we go forward. Each situation requires its own deliberation. That deliberation has been made. Thank you for allowing it to happen.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Aleena Sadownyk

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and give an update on a story on little Aleena Sadownyk from St. Albert. As many members in this House know, she suffers from MPS, a rare enzyme deficiency disease. After facing roadblocks from Alberta Health and the Alberta rare disease program to receive funding for a successful treatment program, Aleena's case was championed by the work of the Isaac Foundation and Andrew McFadyen. The public rallied behind Aleena and her family, and Alberta Health finally made the decision that should have been made earlier.

She's doing great these days. She has more energy than before, she and her dad can finally dance together, and she's now attending preschool. Mr. Speaker, she's bright, and she's happy. Her life stands as an example to everyone in the House about why it is critical that we stand up for the sick, the vulnerable, those who are living without a voice in our society. It's a reminder that we owe it to all Albertans to make sure that their health care

system is there for them when rare diseases strike and extremely expensive treatments are their only hope.

In July a new treatment for MPS IV, the same disease family Aleena suffers from, was approved by Health Canada. There are about six Albertans that need immediate access to this therapy to help prevent the devastating symptoms that come with the disease, symptoms that can't be reversed once they appear in individuals. Alberta could take up to a year reviewing treatment for this disease, a year of costly delays for those six vulnerable Albertans suffering from this terrible disease. Other provinces have approved the funding. Let's not forget about little Aleena. We can and must do better as a province in making sure that we are not denying life-saving services to those in need.

I'm going to finish this member's statement as I did a year ago. Dance, little one, dance.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on its 2013 activities and would like to express my gratitude for the wonderful work of all members of this Assembly who are on that committee.

2:50

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice – and I present the appropriate number of copies – that at the appropriate time I will be rising on a point of privilege concerning the fact that I believe that by briefing Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect Our Children, to the members of the media without providing a similar briefing to members of the opposition beforehand, the government has breached the rights of the members of the House, obstructed the performance of our duties, and has thereby committed a contempt.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, did you have a notice as well?

Mr. Hehr: Well, I had a petition.

The Speaker: I'm sorry.

Could we have consent, then, to revert to Presenting Petitions?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Hehr: I have two sets of petitions, one with thousands of signatures on stating: we the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to consider a financial increase of monthly core benefits to the barriers to full employment and medical benefits with Alberta Works.

I also have a petition here, again with thousands of signatures on, primarily from many of the victims who were caught in the flood and were having serious problems with their DRP claims:

we the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to re-evaluate the disaster recovery program and how it has affected Alberta since its introduction following the flood of 2013 to ensure flood victims are compensated for their losses.

I have the requisite number of copies here.

The Speaker: If there are no other Notices of Motions, let's move on.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I have a number of tablings. I'll go through them quickly, Mr. Speaker. The first is a copy of a news article concerning the Education minister and his request for information from schools on how many different diversity, GSA, and antibullying clubs they have.

The second is a blog by David Climenhaga entitled *Balancing Rights? Just What Rights Are Being Balanced Here?* The Prentice Government's Bill 10 Is a Disgrace.

The third tabling is written by Graham Thomson from the *Edmonton Journal*, entitled *Muddling the Middle Ground*.

Next one is by *daveberta.ca*, which is Dave Cournoyer writing a political blog: *What If Politicians Could Stop School Kids from Starting Clubs?*

A second one again from Mr. Thomson: *Tories Weaken Stronger Effort from Liberals on Gay-straight Alliances*.

An editorial: *Liberals' Bill on Gay-straight Alliances Was Better*.

Then one from Breackenridge: *Prentice Has Made Debate Over Gay-straight Clubs Even More Divisive*.

Finally, quite a lengthy and powerful letter from Kimberley Bewick to the hon. Heather Klimchuk, who is her MLA, outlining why GSAs are so important and how much someone could be bullied and worse as a sexual minority student.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and we have 30 more after this, so let's be brief, please.

Mr. Hehr: No. I'm good.

The Speaker: You're done. Thank you.

Let's move on. Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with two tablings. The first one is the requisite number of copies of a letter that I received from Tracy McKinnon, the chairperson of the Fort McMurray Catholic school division, with their position on Bill 202, where she outlines her concerns that the Education Act would be amended in a manner that takes away the parents' rights and makes the Education minister of the day the interpreter of decisions made under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act as they apply to school boards. It is the belief of the Fort McMurray Catholic school division that parents are the first and primary educators of their children.

My second tabling is the requisite number of copies of a document from Alberta Education entitled *Creating Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments: Gay-straight Alliances in Schools*. It was published in November of 2013, and

it supports, encourages, and promotes the use of gay-straight alliances in Alberta schools.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Before we proceed forward, the hon. Government House Leader, presumably under 7(7).

Mr. Denis: Yes. I was going to ask for unanimous consent to waive rule 7(7). I hope I get it today.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: An objection has been raised, so we'll do as many as we can right now. Let's move on to Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: For what?

The Speaker: I have you down for three tablings.

Ms Notley: Okay. I don't believe I have three, but I do have one. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of the document from which I quoted in my question today. So there we go.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you. Is that all of them?

Ms Notley: No. I guess I do have one more. I'd also like to table the appropriate number of copies of an e-mail written by Faron Smordin in support of Bill 202. In this e-mail Faron writes, "If discrimination is not acceptable on grounds of sexual orientation, not allowing these types of clubs in certain schools would be discriminatory and would be violating the very change Premier Prentice is calling for."

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, real quickly. I've got three tablings here that I've been waiting for a while to do. The first is a tabling from Emma Clowes, who is a constituent of mine, asking the Education minister to take a look at adult school crossing guards for elementary schools. There is some very good information here. I was hoping that the minister could take a look at that.

The second one is from Deb Hutton, in my constituency again, talking about the need for concise legislation to protect homeowners from inadequate representation by boards and management companies in order to protect their investments and their homes. She's got some ideas there. I will forward it to the Service Alberta minister to take a look at it.

Finally, the third one is from Tanya Fix, who is worried about a monopoly that a company called Enform holds over safety and training for hydrogen sulfide. She feels that that should be open to many different safety companies to perform and not just Enform, which has been given that responsibility by the relevant agency.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, I understand you have five tablings.

Ms Fenske: Just one.

The Speaker: Just one today. Okay.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling of an electricity bill that I referred to yesterday in my speech on Bill 201.

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

Mr. Eggen: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings here today. The appropriate number of copies of a letter to the editor written by Sean Graham and published in *Fort McMurray Today*, putting out important statistics on GSAs, including that sexual minority students are seven times more likely to attempt suicide.

The second tabling I have is a letter written by Leah Ward of Edmonton. She reiterates what I think this government should already know, which is that the presence of successful GSAs in schools is known to contribute to positive outcomes for youth and to reduce negative outcomes such as violence and bullying.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, I have a tabling for the Clerk on the statistics I referred to earlier on antibullying clubs, diversity clubs, and gay-straight alliances in Alberta.

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

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings with the requisite number of copies. The first are the photos that I referred to in my questions on highway 36.

The second and third are with reference to a situation in Taber, Alberta, with some of the concerned people there regarding the care that their senior citizens are receiving, including some e-mails and communications with Judith Jensen, whose father has been suffering in that facility.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, it's 3 o'clock almost or thereabouts. Before we stop this section, I'm pleased to table five copies of a letter received in my office today from the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, dated December 2, 2014, requesting early consideration for Bill 201 to proceed to Committee of the Whole. I'll table that with you now.

3:00

Let's move on to the point of privilege.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, please proceed.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) yesterday afternoon I provided written notice to the Speaker of my intention to raise a point of privilege here today. Everyone should have a copy. In fact, the particular breach of privilege that I am raising today feels like a bit of déjà vu on this issue of media receiving technical briefings ahead of the opposition members and staff. We saw this happen on a number of occasions before. Yesterday, on December 1, at about 3:30 p.m. an exclusive technical briefing for the media on Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect Our Children, began. At 4:30 a public press conference was held. Then finally at 5:15 opposition staff and MLAs were briefed on this bill.

This is the first opportunity to raise this matter as per section 115 in *Beauchesne*, and we became aware of the media briefing shortly after it began yesterday at 3:30 p.m. Shortly thereafter we began to understand the nature of the information provided in the

briefing such as that media were provided with a vastly better understanding of the bill well before the opposition did. This is when we learned that our privileges as members of this Assembly and, indeed, the privileges of the Assembly as a whole, in my mind, were in fact breached.

As you know, "privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights . . . without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals." That's also from the *Beauchesne* text, page 11, and *Erskine May* as well on page 75. In this case the abilities of the members of the opposition to conduct their duties were obstructed, and therefore important democratic functions of the Assembly, I believe, were impaired. The government had given oral notice of the bill on Thursday, November 27, and it was on the Order Paper yesterday morning, yet the opposition parties had not yet had an opportunity to be briefed on or to even view the bill.

I believe that the government has committed a contempt of the Assembly by providing information about the government bill to members of the media prior to the bill's introduction in the House and without offering opposition members a similar opportunity.

Ms Notley: It was the same time.

Mr. Eggen: Same time. Okay. Yes, right. Thank you. The same time.

Erskine May on page 251 describes contempt.

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

Mr. Speaker, a similar case of privilege was raised a number of years ago in this Legislature on a ruling from March 5, 2003, page 304 of the *Hansard* of that year. The Speaker found that a government briefing provided to the media concerning a bill "when the bill was on the notice but before it was introduced constitutes a prima facie case of privilege as it offends the dignity and the authority of this Assembly." There is, of course, a slight distinction between these cases in that at this time Bill 10 had been introduced before the media briefing but only a very short time before.

Ms Notley: Three or four minutes.

Mr. Eggen: Three or four minutes, in fact. There you go.

However, the 2003 case is both persuasive and instructive nonetheless. In the debates and in the Speaker's ruling an important element in the Speaker's finding that members had been obstructed in the performance of their duties was that details of the bill, technical information, and the comprehensive understanding of the bill were provided to the media before we got it. The detailed nature of the information allowed the media to have a better understanding of the bill well before the members of the opposition. This in and of itself offends the dignity and the authority of the Assembly. However, it also frustrates the ability of opposition members to analyze a bill and comment on it in the media.

This mode of obstruction of the performance of members' duties is particularly relevant here because the media received a comprehensive technical briefing at 3:30 p.m., nearly two full hours before the opposition members were briefed. In this manner the media was provided with vastly more comprehensive information about the bill and were able to have a superior under-

standing of the bill well in advance of the opposition members. Accordingly, members of the opposition were unable to provide timely and accurate analysis at the subsequent press conference.

I would also note that on March 22, 2011, in a ruling from Speaker Milliken in the federal House of Commons, page 9113 of that *Hansard*, he said:

The member . . . is certainly not misguided in his expectation that members of the House, individually and collectively, must receive from the government particular types of information required for the fulfillment of their parliamentary duties before it is shared elsewhere.

Furthermore, on March 19, 2001, Peter Milliken, Speaker of the federal House of Commons, also said:

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

These findings further clarify that a member's duties are obstructed when they are provided with necessary information after other parties or if they are provided with sustainably less information than other parties. The Assembly should be the place where public debate about legislation begins, not at a press conference mere minutes after the opposition has seen the bill.

So I am arguing out of fairness to all members of the House. Our privilege of being the first to see the details of legislation that is brought before this House must be maintained. That wasn't the case with Bill 10, Mr. Speaker, so I urge you to find that the events of yesterday constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, please excuse my voice. I am still a bit under the weather today.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder has claimed that the government has breached the rights of members of the House by not providing opposition MLAs a briefing on Bill 10 similar to what was provided to members of the media. Despite the chirps from the leader of the fourth party there, Mr. Speaker, I agree with very little of what the Member for Edmonton-Calder has had to say. I can however assure the hon. member that we did in fact provide a briefing to all staff from opposition parties approximately an hour and a half after the briefing with the media.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind this House that briefings provided by the government to the opposition are not in fact compelled by any standing order in this Assembly, nor does the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* or *Beauchesne* say anywhere that this is a requirement. We happily provide these briefings as a courtesy, as the leader of the opposition has pointed out to me – maybe it's polite – so that members from the opposition will have opportunities to ask questions of government officials.

Mr. Speaker, we on the government side even responded to feedback provided by the opposition House leaders, where they asked that briefings take place in the afternoon whenever possible and that they occur after the introduction of the bill. In fact, this is what happened yesterday. We made sure that the briefing with both the media and the opposition took place after Bill 10 was introduced in the House, therefore ensuring that members had the opportunity to attend the briefing with the copy of the bill in hand and the rights of the Assembly protected. [interjection] Now, I am going to continue on despite the leader of the fourth party chirping away.

The opposition was notified in the morning that a briefing would be provided that afternoon in the Carillon Room. It was originally scheduled for 5 p.m., but it was moved to 5:15 p.m. to accommodate the requests from the Member for Edmonton-Centre, which we were happy to do. We began at 5:20 p.m. when the member advised us to begin without her. Officials from Justice and Education went through the bill and took questions until there were no more. Far be it from me just to talk about something that happened when I wasn't there, but the following staff members from the opposition caucuses were present: Bill Bewick and Kim MacDougall from the Wildrose, Scott Fenwick and Kevin Tam from the Alberta Liberals, and Gwen Feeny from the Alberta New Democrats.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to provide clarification for the House and for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. However, given all the information provided, specifically the fact that there is no standing order or reference in any of the documents that we use to govern this Assembly that prohibits the actions of yesterday, I would ask you to find that there was no prima facie case of privilege and dismiss this matter summarily.

Thank you.

3:10

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Anderson: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'll be very brief. I think that the point of the point of privilege is that, you know, the opposition should be able to see the bill and have a good look at it and have a briefing on it before the media gets a briefing on it. I think that's good practice. I would suggest that that be done going forward. This opposition party, I want to make it clear, has never said that we have any problem with morning briefings. Obviously, we'd prefer to see the finished product prior to getting a briefing, but I just want to make it clear that we're early risers here, got a lot of farmers in this caucus, so it's not a big problem to have those morning briefings.

Whether it's a point of privilege, well, I'll leave that to you to decide. I just think it is good practice in the future to make sure that the opposition parties are briefed before the media on these bills or at least get a chance to see it and have an understanding with the minister about what's in there so that we can respond in a coherent manner, which is tough at the best of times, as you well know. So maybe help us out with that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I just want to clarify a few things and speak to this point of privilege that has been raised. Indeed, the briefings are not part of our standing orders. They are part of a House leaders' agreement, an unofficial House leaders' agreement at that. The intent was to make sure that bills were not hitting the floor before opposition parties knew anything about them. We did start out some time ago with these briefings being offered. It has, some would say, degraded – others would say "have moved" – to quite a rigid point. My colleague from the Official Opposition has said that they don't care if there are morning briefings. Other opposition parties have said that they care very much and please don't hold them in the morning. But I just want to point out that at no point did I or anyone else that I'm aware of say that the briefing needs to be after the bill has been introduced.

We had a very strange period of time in the last session where there were panicked phone calls that we had to come to briefings, like, in the next hour because the bill was going to be introduced and they had to get it in before. I was in a meeting where it was said: "Well, this doesn't have to be. Let's accommodate each other. This is not hard-and-fast stuff." Clearly, the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition prefers to see the bill first, but none of this was meant to be hard and fast. Frankly, we don't really want it brought on the floor by the Government House Leader as: we said so. We didn't. We've tried to be accommodating.

I think the real point of this, Mr. Speaker, is that they're meant to be equal briefings. It is small and perhaps nasty of the government to give the media a much larger, more in-depth, more complex, more detailed briefing than they are offering to the opposition, and that indeed is what happened yesterday, I'm sure intentionally, so that the opposition would find themselves in a media scrum without the same information that the media had and, therefore, would be caught out and made to look foolish. I'm sure that was what was going on there, and it doesn't need to. None of this needs to be happening, and I wish it didn't, but unfortunately that is what happens.

You know, there are 60 people elected over there. They don't need to bully people over here. They don't need to stomp on them. They don't need to take extra measures and go out of their way to try and make us look bad. It's just not necessary. But, you know, that's what happened yesterday.

So that's what I think is underpinning my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Calder in bringing this point of privilege forward. It's that these briefings, official or unofficial, are meant to be equal briefings, not to give additional information to one group, which can then try to make the other group look foolish or less informed somehow. In that point I very much agree that what's been going on here is contemptuous of good working relationships in the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, we've heard from one speaker from each party. Customarily I would wait for a day or so to review all the comments, but they were, thankfully, quite brief, and I was able to track them as they went along. So I'm going to deal with this matter right now.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder did provide notice to me through a letter that was received in my office yesterday at 3:42 p.m., so we've had ample time from that perspective, and the prerequisites of notice under Standing Order 15(2) have been met.

Now, the hon. member claims in his notice and in his argument today, as we've just heard, that he feels his rights as a member have been interfered with because the government provided a briefing to the media on Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, but did not provide a similar briefing at the same time to members of the opposition, or words to that effect. Now, I'll just put aside for a moment the assertions and comments made by the Government House Leader that such a briefing was available to the opposition as part of the briefing that was given to the media and that that, in turn, was done after the bill had already been introduced. We'll leave that aside for the moment.

I would note that there is no specific right to have the government brief members on the content of a bill. Certainly, there have been instances in this Assembly where briefings were provided on a bill when the bill was on notice on the Order Paper but had not yet been introduced in the Assembly. In such circumstances a prima facie question of privilege was found by

former Speaker Kowalski on March 5, 2003, at page 304 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day.

In this case we have been advised today that the briefing to which the ND House leader objects occurred after the bill had been introduced in this Assembly. At that time the bill was public and had been provided to all members, obviously, in this Assembly.

Now, a similar purported question of privilege about access to a media briefing was raised by the former leader of the ND opposition on April 27, 2009. At page 824 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day former Speaker Kowalski said the following:

Allowing or not allowing a member to attend a media briefing does not constitute an impediment or obstruction to the member performing his or her parliamentary duties, which presumably is the category of privilege that the leader of the third party relies on.

I would also note that the current leader of the ND opposition raised a similar purported question of privilege on May 28, 2012, concerning a briefing on what was then Bill 1. In ruling that there was not a prima facie question of privilege, I stated on May 29, 2012, at page 59 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day the following:

"There has been no specific evidence to suggest that any member was actually impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties."

In this case today the briefing about which the member complains occurred after Bill 10 was introduced in the Assembly. That's the key thing to remember, the word "after." In fact, there is no right for a member to receive a government briefing on a bill, but having said that, I do not want to discourage such a practice because we all know how much it contributes to the ebb and flow of the House and to the overall understanding of a bill coming onto the floor.

Now, even if the briefing was in any way, quote, proceeding in parliament, unquote, I cannot see how members were obstructed in performing their duties. Accordingly, I don't find there to be any contempt nor a prima facie question of privilege, and as stated in Standing Order 15(7), there will be no further proceedings on this matter.

However, I would encourage government members and others who have bills to be introduced to read *Hansard* for the comments that were made by Airdrie, Edmonton-Centre, and Edmonton-Calder, because I do find value in some of those comments, for your help and assistance. That being the case, this matter is now concluded, and we'll move on.

3:20

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to move Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children.

Before I discuss the details of this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak a little bit about why I decided to introduce and carry it on behalf of the government. Members of this Assembly know me. My constituents know me. They know me and my record as a passionate defender of the rights of LGBTQ citizens in this province. I have fought for the LGBTQ

community since well before I was elected to this Assembly, and I have been proud to carry on that fight as an MLA.

Mr. Speaker, if I may speak on his behalf briefly, I can also say that our Premier has carried that fight proudly and passionately for his entire career. He stood in favour of same-sex marriage as a federal Conservative, both in opposition and in government, in the House of Commons. That debate of nearly a decade ago was extremely heated, and our Premier's stand at that time was not necessarily as widely shared as it is today, but it was the right thing to do. I am very proud to have a Premier of Alberta with such a long and credible record defending LGBTQ rights.

I have seen the good and the bad in debates that affect LGBTQ citizens. I have seen prejudice and even outright hatred, and sometimes that made me wonder if progress on these issues could ever be made. But, Mr. Speaker, I've also seen tolerance and understanding, and that inspired me to keep fighting, knowing that it could make a difference. I've learned that if we want to make progress, sometimes we have to take yes for an answer.

Allow me to explain that. In the last session of this Legislature an opposition motion, Motion 503, went down in defeat. Had it passed, it would have mandated school boards to accept any and all attempts by students to establish gay-straight alliances in schools. Now, I voted for Motion 503. I spoke strongly in favour of it. I wish that it could have passed, but it didn't, Mr. Speaker. The result of that failed motion was that the status quo with respect to the rules on gay-straight alliances remained intact.

Now in a fresh legislative session this Assembly received a similar attempt from the opposition, this time in the form of a bill rather than a motion, Bill 202. There are differences, though. Bill 202 asked us not only to support gay-straight alliances in the same way as Motion 503 but also to repeal section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act, which speaks to specific rights of parents to withdraw children from their schools when certain subject matters are discussed. However well intentioned, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 202 was unlikely to have passed in this Assembly either. The result: once again the status quo with respect to gay-straight alliances.

Mr. Speaker, I am not satisfied with the status quo. Members of the opposition might be. They might honestly believe that this is an all-or-nothing question. It is possible that they might also be quite happy to hold a no vote over the heads of their opponents in the next election and accuse them of intolerance or worse. I would have supported Bill 202 just as I supported Motion 503, but in the absence of their success, I choose to support progress instead of the status quo. I choose to support Bill 10.

This bill is the product of thoughtful, respectful, and thorough debate within the government caucus, the type of open and honest debate that makes me proud to be a member of the PC Party of Alberta. I heard views expressed on all sides of this issue, as did the Premier, and with those views taken into account, the government came back with a balanced and measured piece of legislation. This bill does several things. First and foremost for me, it makes important progress on the rights of the LGBTQ community. I believe this bill represents a significant step forward.

Let me discuss what the bill does on the subject of gay-straight alliances. As I said before – and I'll say it again – I support gay-straight alliances. They are proven as a means to protect kids, to deter and prevent bullying, and to promote inclusiveness. I share the goal of many Albertans to have zero roadblocks facing any students who wish to form a gay-straight alliance in their schools. Indeed, across the province schools and school boards have shown a remarkable commitment to ensuring that such requests are honoured. The Minister of Education informed this House

yesterday that the number of gay-straight alliances in Alberta has grown to 94, and, anecdotally, I hear from stakeholders in the LGBTQ community as well as those within the school system that establishing gay-straight alliances is generally seamless and is well supported by teachers, by administrators, by parents, and by others.

What Bill 10 does is to create a clear mechanism for those rare cases where students may run into roadblocks at their schools to have an appeal process with the school boards. They did not have that before. If a school said no, that was it. Our bill creates a process that is more accessible and democratic. School boards are elected bodies, and if they were to keep a roadblock like that in place, they would be answerable to the people who put them in place.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 10 also makes progress on LGBTQ issues more broadly. In Bill 10 we are enshrining and protecting sexual orientation in the Alberta Bill of Rights. That is an important step. It sends a signal to the public and to governments now and in the future that the rights of the LGBTQ community are fundamental in our policy-making.

Further, Bill 10 makes a change to the language that applies to parental rights in their children's education; specifically, Bill 10 repeals section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act and moves those provisions to the School Act and, eventually, to the Education Act. This makes our parental rights regime consistent with other jurisdictions. In doing so, Bill 10 also removes the words "sexual orientation" from the provision.

So what does that mean in a practical sense? Well, it means that parents will continue to receive notice when planned classroom discussions are to involve a number of sensitive areas and be given the option of withdrawing children, with no academic penalty. These include religion, patriotic exercises, and human sexuality. However, sexual orientation is no longer on that list. This has been a major irritant for the LGBTQ community, the idea that discussion in classrooms around gender identity or about rights for the LGBTQ community in Canada, for example, should be something that we need to warn parents about. We are removing that irritant.

There is a consensus that parents should still have notice with respect to religious instruction or patriotic exercises and indeed with respect to human sexuality, but if instructors wish to discuss broader concepts of sexual orientation separate and apart from discussions of human sexuality, we are signalling that those should not be a part of those provisions. It is because we value parental rights so highly that in addition to maintaining these provisions in the School Act and the Education Act, our government is also cementing parental rights in the Alberta Bill of Rights.

Mr. Speaker, I do not come to the Legislature today to tell you, my colleagues, or my constituents that this has been an easy position for me to arrive at. I have worked tirelessly on these issues, as have others in this Chamber. When it comes to gay-straight alliances in Alberta schools, I remain of the same view as when I cast a vote in favour of Motion 503. As legislators we are judged by our constituents on our records, on what we say, on how we vote, and on whether the former is consistent with the latter. I understand that when I supported Motion 503, it was not the same as what's presented here in Bill 10, but I also understand that an all-or-nothing approach to this issue has resulted not in all but in nothing. I wasn't going to be satisfied with "nothing" again.

There will surely be much spirited debate on this bill in the hours ahead. This is to be expected. The issues at stake are emotional. I haven't set my emotions aside either, Mr. Speaker,

but I hope that our debate can remain civilized and that it can remain at the standards that our constituents expect of us.

I urge all members to join me in supporting Bill 10. It reinforces the rights that parents have with respect to making choices about their children's education. It maintains the autonomy of school boards, which are elected and answerable to constituents at the ballot box should they take an approach that doesn't match their constituents' expectations. Most importantly, Bill 10 takes steps to protect our kids and advances the rights of the LGBTQ community.

I look forward to passing this bill, Mr. Speaker, and putting real progress in place. Thank you.

3:30

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe there's an understanding between the Official Opposition Wildrose and the Alberta Liberal Party for the House leader for the Liberals to speak next. I don't need any notes at this point. We'll just recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to go ahead.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to acknowledge the support of my colleagues in the Wildrose and thank them for allowing me to take their position as first responder to this bill. It is the kind of courtesy that I've come to expect from them, and I appreciate that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, gee, I finally get to get up and talk about a bill, not mine, unfortunately, but the government's. So here we are. My question is: will kids be safer tomorrow when this bill passes than they were yesterday? There's nothing in this bill that says that that's going to be the case, and I'm really, really disappointed that that is what this bill is.

We have the additional issue on top of us of the clock ticking. As I'm sure everyone in the House knows but they may not know outside of the House, the Government House Leader, before the bill was even introduced, called closure on every single section of this bill. So we have two hours to debate in second, two hours to debate in Committee of the Whole, and two hours to debate in third. That will be the sum total of the debate on this bill, which is really interesting when you consider that a number of times the colleagues opposite have made much in the media and other places in saying that there's been so much debate on this issue, they're sick of it. They're sick of all the debate on this. And then others have said that we should have continued debate on this. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we're about 15 minutes into the debate that we've actually managed to have in the Assembly, which is the debate that counts.

I find it really . . .

An Hon. Member: Troubling.

Ms Blakeman: . . . troubling, yes, but just bloody typical at this point of government to try and restrict the debate. That's just become their modus operandi. They can't bring us good bills, so they bring us bad ones, and then they make us debate them as fast as possible. Then I expect that everyone is going to get out of Dodge – I'm just doing a little bit of extrasensory perception here – I'm betting, Thursday. There's a hot foot. I can feel it. Hotfooting it out of town.

We have had very little debate on this issue, in fact, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of questions that I want to go over or a couple of observations that I have. For starters, we keep hearing about the need for balance, and I find that really curious when you're talking about human rights. What is it about kids at high risk of committing suicide who want a peer support group? Who is

balancing this? What do they need to be balanced for? Why can't they just have a peer support group, help each other, and move on in their lives in the way that it's been studied and proven to actually work?

I always hear about this balance, and that's sort of become a little cue to me. When the government starts talking about balance – not the Official Opposition, mind you. They're talking about a different thing. But, certainly, when the government starts to talk about balance, I think: "Oh, yeah. They don't like this bill, and they don't know what to do with it. They can't quite admit that they're deeply divided, so they'll call it balance and move on."

You see, I don't think this balances at-risk kids with anything. Can they go and get a GSA today? No, not according to this bill. They're absolutely no further ahead today or tomorrow than they were yesterday. This bill does not help them with that. Can they force or mandate or insist or ask a policy to include – or wait. What I was trying to do in my bill was make sure that they could not be excluded. Can any of those things come to pass with this bill? No. They can ask a teacher or principal if they could have a peer support, and if the teacher or principal says no, that's it. Now, I don't expect you're going to have many eight-year-olds, but I don't know many 11-, 12-, 13-, 14-, 15-year-olds that have the wherewithal or even the knowledge to go: "Okay. Now, I'm going to go to the school board." Maybe they can get their parents to help.

The definitions that have been left in Bill 10 about the parameters that the school board makes these decisions on are pretty thorough, Mr. Speaker, and they can just say no for all the reasons. Especially those in the Catholic schools and in the private schools, they can just say no. No, that's not what they believe; that's not what this Catholic school is about. No. And that's the end of it. So are these kids any further ahead, these at-risk kids who, by the way, have no voice and have had no voice in this discussion? All these adults yammering on about their lives, but the kids themselves are not in here. They've had no voice, and it affects them so intimately.

So they go to the school board, and the school board says no. Then what? Well, this government, god bless them, is going to let these kids crack open the piggy bank or raid their university fund and go to court against their school board. Really, Mr. Speaker, how likely is that? Truly, not very likely. There are a few kids out there, a few really determined parents that might take it on, but these are long battles. The Delwin Vriend case took five or six years to get to the Supreme Court and stupendous amounts of money. Stupendous amounts of money.

I think the government telling these kids that that's okay, that they've got, air quotes here, legal recourse and they can take the school board to court – they're being sold a pig in a poke. It's pretty far-fetched, really far-fetched that they're going to be able to do that and be successful. Are they going to be able to get their GSA if they're at a school that doesn't want them to have it? No. Are we further ahead? No. I don't know what the government is talking about here, but they're not going to get any further ahead.

Further than that, there's even more confusion, if that is possible. I don't know of a government that can create more confusion out of pretty simple things than these guys, but they've managed to do it.

Dr. Swann: They're trying to placate certain people.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, they're trying to placate certain people.

They have removed section 11.1 from the Alberta Human Rights Act. I wonder if they would have done it if I hadn't brought Bill 202 forward. Somehow I think not. But they have removed it,

and then they put it into section 58. Now, what's interesting is that I stripped off "sexual orientation" and "sexuality" quite on purpose, quite deliberately, first of all, because what is sexuality if it isn't sexual health education?

Now, according to the media briefing – this information was not extended to us in the briefing that the opposition members got – the government will consider gender identity under sexuality, under that title, under section 50 of the School Act and section 58 of the Education Act. There's also a possibility – the question wasn't answered by the member, so maybe she can get up and answer it now – that it might also consider sexual orientation. Excuse me? So we've just cut it out of one place, moved the whole kit and caboodle over here, and now we allow that we're going to use that same term as a way of denying it to people again.

Can sexual orientation be discriminated against? Yes, of course. If they're going to put it under sexuality, absolutely. Can they deny gender identity to kids? You bet. Absolutely, if they're going to classify it under sexuality. That's the question that we have for the government. What exactly is under sexuality? Give us the definition, please, because the way it is now in the briefing that was given to the media, gender identity was definitely under it. When they asked, "Is sexual orientation under it?" that question wasn't answered. Let's have that question answered because if it is, we've got exactly the same thing in a different act with the same result. Kids with gender identity issues and kids with sexual orientation issues will not be allowed to do this.

One of the things that I was really concerned about in all of this, Mr. Speaker, was this whole debate/no debate idea, so I am going to circulate now a hoist amendment, which I will pass on. People say: why on earth would you be doing a hoist amendment, Laurie? Well, because I like parliamentary process. And parliamentary process says: well, why would you be hoisting a bill? Well, because it's not ready, because it hasn't had the kind of consultation and debate that it should have. So you essentially say: okay; let's bring this back at some point in the future, and then we'll be able to consider this with better resources in front of us, better consultation, a better written bill, perhaps. That's what I'm suggesting with this.

3:40

I am moving that second reading of Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence." That is duly approved and has been sent to the table.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, and I thank you for reading it into *Hansard*. I think everybody knows what the essence of a hoist amendment is. Let's get it circulated as quickly as we can, and with your unanimous consent, hon. members, we'll just let the hon. member carry on. Shall we do that? Yes? Okay.

Hon. member, why don't you just carry on, then, as the amendment is being distributed.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. So are kids safer now? No. Can kids get GSAs under this bill any better than they could yesterday or the day before? No, they can't. We're dealing here with a paramountcy of rights, which is – oh, I'm sorry; I didn't send the signed one. Sorry. There's the signed one.

It appears to be a paramountcy of rights, but in fact we don't have a paramountcy of rights in our Charter, in our Human Rights Act. The Alberta Bill of Rights is a piece of paper two pages long

with four sections in it, and most of the sections repeat themselves. It has absolutely no compliance mechanisms in it, it has absolutely no enforcement mechanisms in it, and it has no penalty mechanisms in it. So when they say that that is going to protect sexual orientation in Alberta, it's nothing. There is nothing in that bill that would protect them. Nothing. It's a piece of paper that says nice things except for one thing in there. It is not useful in protecting anyone with issues of sexual orientation. None of it. So I don't know why they puff up this Bill of Rights. Nobody ever heard of it before yesterday, and it's not going to help them at all. It's not protecting them at all. It has no compliance, no enforcement, no penalties. If it is violated, what would they do? They'd run after you with a piece of paper going: don't do that. Oh my, that will scare people, for sure. No, there's no help out of the Alberta Bill of Rights, none whatsoever.

We've also got a situation, and I was certainly the recipient of it. I am happy to share my telephone log and the many, many e-mails that I got from parents that were staggeringly ill informed and thought that GSAs were in schools to perform various sexual acts on children, to train them for pedophiles. It's just a staggering, shocking, appalling lack of information, and that was being perpetuated across this province. That's what they thought GSAs were, and that's why they campaigned so hard with my colleagues opposite to get them stopped. When I tried to read my bill to them, no, they didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to hear that sexual orientation and gender identity is genetic and there's nothing folks can do about it.

That's why kids need peer support groups, so they can figure out how to deal with this. But no. We had influence from a group of people that (a) didn't want to read the bill and (b) insisted on perpetuating – I don't even know how to describe it. I've never read anything like that. It was disturbing, frankly, that people could be that far wrong on what was trying to be done here.

I didn't start out with Bill 202 to do big things. I started out to do a couple of small things that were very meaningful to people: make sure that you could no longer discriminate against people based on sexual orientation, particularly not in the school system, that kids would be able to access GSAs as part of all the other antibullying measures that were being offered and, specifically, that they wouldn't be excluded from the antibullying measures that were being offered, which is what's happening now in the Catholic schools. They just won't offer it. They just include it in "all": oh, those kids under "all," they're all taken care of. Well, if that was true, we wouldn't have kids out there trying to get GSAs established in their school. They would feel they had been taken care of.

No kid sets himself out on that path and makes himself a public spectacle because it's already there for them. It's not already there. They are not looking after them in antibullying clubs and diversity clubs. They're not. And for a child that is questioning sexual orientation to go into a diversity club and say, "Well, I'm here because I heard this is where I could talk to people about sexual orientation," and then find out that is not what that club is for – it's for racial antidiscrimination or disabled antidiscrimination – that kid just outed themselves in the school. For that, they're going to at least get beat up in the parking lot if not much, much, much worse.

It was a small thing I was trying to do, but it had an immense effect on people's lives, and I'm really upset to see what's happened with it. I'm upset to see the amount of foul thinking that is out there about a group of people that moves among us in our society. Extending a human right to one person or group of people does not take rights away from someone else. It doesn't.

And I appreciate that parents want to supervise the teaching of their children or want to have input into it – I appreciate that – but in the end run if your children don't get sexual health education, who is paying for their sexually transmitted infection when they're an adult and wandering around with it? All of us are. We all take responsibility for that. That's why we all take responsibility for education. We understand that a well-educated youth improves us all, gives us all a better society, and it's all of our responsibility to pay for that.

I don't have kids, and I happily pay my school taxes. I believe in that public payment of school education. I think it's an important part of Canada and of Alberta. I never agree with people that phone and say: well, I'm a senior, and I shouldn't have to pay school property tax anymore. Yes, you do because you want people to be well educated so that when you're in a nursing home, the person looking after you has had a good education. That is the way I explain it back, and usually they'll admit that, yes, indeed, they do want someone that is well educated. So that is why we all join in education, but I think there also has to be a base point of what everyone is educated in.

I will not accept that it is okay in any way, shape, or form, under any euphemisms, under any clause, you know – and in this case it's hidden away in a parental opt-out section, section 58, which is what Bill 10 is presuming to do, to hide it away again under that subheading of sexuality, to hide away sexual orientation and make it okay to discriminate again. Not okay. Not okay. I never want to see that happen. I won't discriminate against seniors or the disabled or farmers. I don't care. I'm put on this Earth to make sure that I treat people with respect and dignity. I happily disagree with my colleagues beside me – and they will tell you that I do that – but I still respect them. I still honour the fact that they feel passionately about that.

So are we protecting people from being discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation under Bill 10? No. Are we protecting children who are at risk? No. Are we protecting children that are asking for GSAs to be available, to be accommodated for them? No. They can go to court to fight it. They can raid their university fund and take the school board to court in order to try to get a peer support group in their school. This is the length that this government wants to put children at? Seriously? Like, in no other cause would we do that. Even in equal rights they don't do that to kids. Even in the States, where they have the ERA, that requires that they fund girls' sports in exactly the same way as they fund boys' sports, they didn't make one little girl that wanted to play hockey go and take the school board to court in order to play on the hockey team. The whole team worked at it. But that is what our government is anticipating here, sending a kid off to try to battle the school board and then battle the courts in order to get a peer support group.

3:50

That is just not right, Mr. Speaker. It's just not Albertan. It's just not. We are good people. We believe in co-operation. We believe in honouring each other's opinions. We don't believe in subjecting children – or please tell me we don't – to some unbelievable hoops to jump through because we can't just come out and say: "Yes, you will get a peer support group. We will accommodate you. If we can't do it in our little tiny one-room schoolhouse in Somewhereville Alberta, we will accommodate you at the school next door, and we'll make sure that you're looked after there." It's about accommodation. That's what it was about. It wasn't about making anybody do things, but it was about making sure that kids had access to this in a real, meaningful, possible way. Have we got possible now? No, we don't.

I've talked a little bit about, you know, being bullied as a kid. We talk about that a lot in this House, and we've all talked about how important it is to assist kids not to be bullied. Boy, I'll tell you that I had a real taste of it yesterday in this House, and it was no fun, and I wouldn't recommend it to anyone, but I'm tougher than those kids, and you shouldn't be letting those kids be subject to that. You shouldn't be letting those kids be bullied.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll just make a couple of points of clarity here. We have before us a hoist amendment, and it will be referred to as amendment H1. The nature of this is to simply move that the bill be not now read a second time but be postponed for a certain period of time. I believe it's six months.

So all members who wish to may speak at this time, not all at once but one at a time, for up to 15 minutes, and 29(2)(a) will be available immediately after the next speaker, which in this case will be Airdrie. The order will be Wildrose, followed by the NDP, followed by the independent. Then we'll go back to government, a Liberal member, a Wildrose member, an NDP member and follow that sequence for as long as we have speakers. I believe that is in keeping with the spirit of how debate here should proceed.

That having been said, please remember that at the end of the speakers list the question will automatically be put on the vote at second. If it succeeds, you know what happens then; it gets effected. If it fails, then, of course, the question is immediately put for second reading.

That being said, let us move on with the hon. Member for Airdrie for his comments.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is tough. This is tough stuff. It's not always fun to debate these things, but some debates are tough, you know, and we need to have them, and we need to have them in a respectful manner.

This has been somewhat of a frustrating experience, I think, for a lot of members in this House, and I think maybe there's a little bit more empathy over on the other side now for having words thrown around and accusations thrown around about your tolerance and about your acceptance of other people because you take a position on an issue, whether that be free speech or whether that be protecting parental rights or religious freedoms, and trying to balance that with protecting kids and protecting students who are from the LBGQT community.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

Sometimes it just happens in this political forum that you get your intentions or your motives questioned, and all of a sudden words like "intolerant" and "bigot" and so forth are bandied about. It is pretty painful to hear those things, especially when that has nothing to do with who you are as people and who we are as people in this Legislature.

That said, I would like to commend the Member for Edmonton-Centre for bringing her bill forward. She's obviously very passionate about it, clearly, and with good reason, but I believe in this debate she's managed to be passionate about these issues without stereotyping other people who disagree with her views on certain aspects of it as being bigoted or intolerant and so forth. Sometimes there's a line there, and sometimes we walk and straddle that line as we discuss these things, but I think she needs to be commended for straddling that very difficult line of being respectful.

Balance is tough. I know that the member just said that she doesn't like the word "balance," but for me it is a bit of a balancing act because it's genuine. We have all of these different

competing – they seem like they’re competing interests on the surface in that, you know, the rights of equality are obviously something we feel very passionate about. That includes that no one will be discriminated against based on any identifiable characteristic, very much including – we can go through the big list in section 15 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms – race, religion, colour, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and sexual orientation. So you have that equality right that you’re balancing.

You also have the right of religious freedom. It’s a difficult one because a lot of folks and a lots of parents and faith-based educators who start schools or have run our Catholic schools for many years, et cetera, want to have a fully immersive experience where their doctrine and their beliefs and their culture is felt throughout their entire educational experience. They feel very much that their freedom of religion is dependent upon that consistency of culture, of spiritual and religious background, and so forth. That means everything to them. I mean, you know if you’ve talked to them that it means so much to them as individuals about who they are, and it needs to be respected.

Of course, the protection of children. Who here doesn’t think we shouldn’t do everything we can to protect children who are being bullied? Of course, that includes very much our LGBTQ youth, who, frankly, over the last decade or so have become, I would say, one of the major targeted groups of bullying. I think that we have to recognize that. I think we do recognize that. Certainly, the introducer of Bill 10 talked about that. It’s a very serious issue.

Of course, there’s the autonomy of local school boards – that’s an important principle – and parental rights. You know, many of us in here have children and have been blessed with that. I’ll tell you that it’s an overwhelming experience, of course, being a parent in a lot of situations. You want to talk to your kids about these very difficult subjects that perhaps your parents maybe didn’t talk to you too much about growing up, and then all of sudden you’ve got to figure out how you’re going to communicate these things to a little 10-year-old, who’s wide eyed and completely innocent about a whole bunch of things. That’s a tough thing to do, but you try to as parents come together and figure out the best way, and you talk through it. It’s a tough thing to do, and it’s challenging. So we’re trying to balance all these rights.

The Wildrose proposed several amendments that we thought would take Bill 202 and, in our view, better balance those rights, that I just mentioned. We were looking very much forward to the debate. You know, I would have liked to have debated that bill. I think that it would have been worth debate. Certainly, we would have brought amendments, and we could have debated those amendments, and the government could have also brought amendments. But that’s not where we’re at right now. You know, we’re here now. We have a bill in front of us, and we’re going to have to vote on it.

One thing that I want to make very clear is that although the concepts and the principles I’m talking about right now are shared by the Wildrose, we’re very lucky in our caucus that we do have free votes. We’ve always had free votes, and we’re looking forward to voting freely on this bill. I know that there will be people in our caucus that vote against and people that vote for. I myself will be voting for Bill 10 for several reasons.

First of all, I want to commend the addition of “sexual orientation” to the Alberta Bill of Rights. I think that was read in by the Supreme Court of Canada a long time ago, but symbols matter. It’s not good enough that it’s just there in the ether having been read in; it’s good to actually put it down to paper. I think that that’s important.

I also think another piece that I feel that I support in the bill is the addition of parental rights to the Alberta Bill of Rights. I want to frankly commend this Premier and members from all parties that might agree with that for doing that.

4:00

Parents do have rights, and we have seen through a very sad portion of our Canadian history what happens when parental rights to decide with regard to their children’s education and cultural upbringing and so forth are interfered with by the state in the name of progress. Of course, one of the worst, darkest hours of our history was the residential school debacle – “debacle” is not even the right word – tragedy, awfulness, whatever adjective you want to use. That, to me, is an example of why we have to be very, very, very careful to always protect the rights of parents with regard to making informed decisions about their kids. That needs to be respected, and I want to commend the Premier for including those rights in the Alberta Bill of Rights. Hopefully, they will stay there for, certainly, the rest of my lifetime and, hopefully, beyond. So thank you to him for that.

The notification requirement. It was previously, obviously, in the Alberta Human Rights Act. It’s now being moved to the Education Act. The notification requirement for parents would be that when religion or human sexuality is explicitly taught, parents will be informed and will have the option to opt their child out. I really feel very strongly that this is an important piece of this piece of legislation if this part is respected. You know, people want to say: “Oh, because you want parents to be informed of this, therefore that just means you don’t want to talk about these issues. You don’t want to talk about equality. You don’t want to talk about sexual health. You don’t want to talk about these things.”

I have four boys. One just went through his first sex education class at school. I got the note and everything and was informed and left him in, obviously, to go through the sexual education class that was there. I knew what was going to be taught. I was able to sit down with him prior to and after, and I was able to have a sensitive and really healthy discussion with my child about all the questions that surround human sexuality that he was learning about on that day. I’ve got to tell you how absolutely critical it is for me as a parent to be able to have that conversation and to be part of the conversation. I know that little guy better than anybody else other than Anita, my wife. I mean, why shouldn’t I as a parent have the right, frankly, and why shouldn’t I have the responsibility, when we’re talking about something like religious belief and human sexuality, with regard to my child? Of course I should be involved in that conversation.

I think that to say that that is in any way a sign of intolerance is – I just can’t equate the two. I think that we have a responsibility. If parents, frankly, are more involved with their kids in discussing those topics and knowing what is being taught to their children and then making sure that the sensitivities of their individual child are addressed, I think that actually leads to better outcomes. It leads to better sexual health and better, more balanced children, frankly, than just having a stranger speak about those things, not necessarily a stranger but someone who, clearly, is less familiar with them.

So I really appreciate that that notification requirement is going to stay in there, and I don’t think we should say that human sexuality means one thing and doesn’t mean another thing. For me, it means that for anything that pertains to sexuality and the sexuality of my child, I just want to be a part of that discussion. If it’s going to happen in school, I want to know about it, and I want to make sure that I’m a part of the conversation with my child. I think that that’s a responsibility of parents.

Finally, I want to talk about GSAs. I don't know of anyone in here that doesn't support the formation of gay-straight alliances when they are requested by students. You know, I went to public school myself. I know that gay-straight alliances have had a very good effect in public schools and, actually, in a few faith-based schools where they've been introduced in some circumstances.

I would note two things. First of all, again, each different faith – we have a lot of different schools in my current riding and my old riding. The Khalsa school is a great Sikh school just on the northeast side of Calgary. We have different Christian schools and so forth. The schools take very seriously that they want to keep a certain culture, a certain framework, and they want to have everything, you know, their entire experience, immersed in their religious culture. That's what they want. It's not that they don't support antibullying clubs or diversity clubs or GSAs or anything like that. They just want to make sure that language and perspectives that they have are a part of that discussion. I don't in any way think that these faith-based schools are doing this because they're in some way bigoted against these students or want them to be hurt. I just don't believe that. I just believe they want to do it in a culturally sensitive manner that makes sense for their individual school. In some cases that might mean doing it a little differently than I would do it or most of the members in this Assembly would do it with regard to allowing a GSA. I think that does need to be respected.

I would note, too, that the Wildrose would like to bring an amendment to Bill 10. It's specifically regarding when a student requests a GSA, that if the answer does end up being no – and we would hope in most cases it wouldn't be – in cases where for some reason the answer is no, we believe as the Wildrose caucus there should be a requirement for the school to work with the individual student on a very specific antibullying and support strategy that meets the individual needs of that individual student or students who requested the GSA in the school.

I think that the current government's resolution to that is good. I don't think it's a poor resolution, but I don't think it gives enough protection and enough resources to those students who feel bullied in those schools in those circumstances. I credit them for working on that balance, and I think they're really striving for it in an honest and sincere way, but I think that we could increase support for those students by making it a requirement that the school work with them on their specific needs, whatever that may mean. Each individual circumstance would be different.

I will be supporting Bill 10, and thank you for the debate, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I would remind you that we are speaking on the hoist amendment.

The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise to formally engage in this debate today in the Legislature. Let me begin by saying that I will be voting in favour of this hoist because we cannot support this piece of legislation as it is currently constructed.

I want to begin by acknowledging the fact that this legislation does remove 11.1 from the human rights code, and that is a good thing because I've always characterized 11.1 as a scar on an otherwise beautiful document. It's a scar that existed only in the province of Alberta. It was a scar that was inflicted upon an otherwise beautiful document by this PC government in 2009. I am pleased that that particular scar is being corrected through this bill. Nonetheless, unfortunately, the other components of this bill are premised on assumptions that are so deeply troubling to me

that I'm still not able to support it, and those are the things that I want to talk about.

First of all, of course, there's this issue of parental right to be notified on education with respect to human sexuality. Let me just put it very clearly on the record. I have no difficulty with that. I think parents should be part of a conversation about human sexuality, and they should know when their kids are being taught those issues at school. I agree with the kind of scenario that the Member for Airdrie outlined in that regard.

4:10

That's not the issue here, though. We're not talking about issues of human sexuality. We are talking about the ability to openly and with pride protect the rights of students who are members of the LGBTQ community or who are themselves part of a family where, say, both parents are same-sex or transgendered or another member of a sexual minority group. That's who we are talking about protecting. So that's a different issue.

This bill, if you look at the history, was very clearly devised, delivered, distributed, promoted in an effort to negate discussion and to protect this government and the Official Opposition from having to vote on Bill 202. It is a very intentional attempt to muddy the waters as much as possible and avoid a clear understanding of what people's positions were with respect to Bill 202.

I've been very pleased to see the commentary that has occurred within the public since because most people see that for what it is. They understand that at its heart this bill does nothing to protect the rights of sexual minority students to promote and begin a GSA in their schools. In fact, what this does is that it simply protects the status quo with respect to the rights of students to seek out a GSA as a means of protecting themselves and their rights in their school setting.

To be clear, GSAs do exist in other jurisdictions which have faith-based schools as part of their tradition. They exist both in Ontario and Manitoba, and it happened, frankly, without the sky falling. Frankly, were there enough courage in this Assembly, it could happen here.

This government continuously talks about balancing – balancing – the rights between parents and LGBTQ students. I am going to talk about how offensive that notion is in just a moment, but I just want to speak for a moment as a parent because everyone keeps talking about parental rights. Well, I too am a parent, Madam Speaker, and I have to tell you that I am deeply offended that another parent believes that they have a right to tell me what after-school, extracurricular activities my kids can be part of. And be very clear: that's what's happening here. No one is telling any single solitary parent in this province that their children have to go to a GSA after school. No one is telling a parent that, and that is not what Bill 202 would have done. What's happening here is that this government, probably with the support of the Official Opposition, is telling me that my kids cannot go to a GSA if they choose to if their school board will not allow them to do it.

So just to be very clear, parental rights are at issue here, but it's my parental rights that are at issue because it's the ability to go that is being limited. It is not the ability to not go which is being limited. Let us be very clear that that so-called balance is disingenuous at best when it is being discussed here.

Now, let's talk as well about the notion of balancing human rights and balancing one of those protected grounds under section 15 of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Well, I've said this before, and I'm going to say it again. If a parent came to me and said that their rights were being prohibited or somehow limited because my kid wanted to start an antiracism class or an

antiracism club after school and if this government stood up for that parent's rights to say that my kid cannot start an antiracism club after school, people in this province, probably even the majority of folks over on that side, would lose their heads, and they should, because we all get that racism is bad.

I hate to break it to you, folks, but racism is not the only prohibited ground of discrimination under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Sexual orientation is also a prohibited ground under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Let us be very clear. That Canadian Charter does not – it does not – say: “Racism is something that should not ever happen. We also kind of really hope that if it's not inconvenient for you, you should also try not to be homophobic either.” That's not the way the Charter reads. The Charter reads that both rights deserve equal protection, yet implicit in this government's bill is a prioritization, a hierarchy of which rights they believe are more important than others. I'm talking just in terms of those enumerated grounds upon which all Canadians deserve protection, which are listed in section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So inherent in that, then, is that issue.

I find it incredibly troubling that probably the majority of people in this Legislature don't understand that people and children and families and communities in this province deserve as much protection from homophobia as they do from racism. It is very clear to me that that understanding is not commonly understood, embraced, or accepted across the aisle. It's that fundamental presumption which drives the decision of this government to talk about balancing the rights of parents, to tell me that my kids cannot participate in a GSA in a publicly funded school should the school board decide that they're opposed to it. That is what is fundamentally wrong with this bill, and that is why under no circumstances can I support it.

Let's just talk a little bit about some of the other disingenuous arguments that we've seen float across the aisle from people defending this piece of legislation. Well, the sponsor of the bill has talked publicly several times today about how she will do everything she can to promote GSAs in as many parts of the province as she possibly can. So my specific question to her is – I don't know what her financial situation is like, if she has been talking perhaps with the Minister of Justice – has she planned for that roughly \$25,000 that each judicial review application will cost?

Mr. Eggen: Or more.

Ms Notley: Is the plan to pay that \$25,000 or more on behalf of each marginalized kid who is told that he or she and their friends cannot start a club, a voluntary club, after school that would help kids that are systemically bullied as a result of outdated and undeveloped understandings of what true equality consists of? When those kids are bullied by that, they need to be able to reach into their back pocket and bust out with a \$25,000 bill to pay for a lawyer to do a judicial review application, and people over there call that a solution.

I mean, it's interesting. You know, we often talk about the Premier and his relationship with the banking industry. But if he, honest to God, thinks a \$25,000 bill is a solution for the majority of kids who are going to come up against the inability to develop clubs that will provide them support and protection from bullying, then it is clearly an indication that he's desperately out of touch with the economic circumstances of the vast majority of people who live in the province over which he has a governance relationship or governance authority. I don't know. Maybe CIBC,

maybe Enbridge can pull 25,000 bucks out of their back pocket to run a judicial review application, but I'm pretty sure most Albertans cannot. So to suggest that that is a solution is disingenuous, Madam Speaker, incredibly disingenuous.

We've talked about how this might perhaps be an issue with respect to, you know, some issues around faith. But I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that that's not the case. It's absolutely not the case. Again, these GSAs would be voluntary. No one is imposing them on anybody. The EPSB allows for every child within the Edmonton public school board who wants to start a GSA to start a GSA, and that's why the vast majority of GSAs in Alberta resides in the Edmonton public school board.

Interestingly, the Edmonton public school board uses its public dollars to also fund several destination faith-based schools. That exists within the EPSB, yet we've not heard a peep about how that somehow has undermined the rights of those who participate and attend those schools because, in my view, it doesn't. A voluntary support group adjacent to a faith-based education: they're not mutually exclusive, Madam Speaker. Frankly, I think that it's the people who suggest that they are who are the ones that are sowing divisiveness. Those are the ones that are sowing unnecessary debate. Those are the ones who are sowing a fight where none exists. I think that if it can happen in EPSB, frankly, it should be able to happen anywhere else.

4:20

There's a lot of talk about school board rights. School board rights. Now, I find that very entertaining, Madam Speaker, because school boards, just to be clear, are institutions, and when we're talking about the fundamental, Charter-protected rights of human beings, you know, it's a little bit ironic that a minister who was prepared to overlook school board rights when it came to funding priorities is prepared to now hold them up as a means of undermining the Charter-protected rights of kids and their families.

You know, I just want to mention that there was a vote at one point by the School Boards Association, back in 2012, around a policy that would have supported, among other things, GSAs. At that point one of the people amongst those school boards who voted against that policy was quoted as saying that, quote, if children with a gay tendency appear a certain way, we know that we have to be vigilant to make sure they are not discriminated against. End quote. But when asked if those students should try to be less identifiable, the same school board representative said, quote, I think that for their own benefit it would be helpful. End quote. That's a good example of the concerns that are expressed by some representatives of the school boards against adopting a policy that would have been adopted had we voted in favour of Bill 202.

Those are the rights and the opinions that these folks over there are committed to supporting and protecting. I would say to you, Madam Speaker, that that caucus over there is profoundly, deeply, and probably irreparably out of touch with the values of the vast majority of Albertans in choosing to represent those notions. These are fundamental rights. They can be accommodated. They can be accommodated with an inclusive, welcoming, voluntary approach. That is something that Bill 10 prohibits. It is something that facilitates an ongoing ban on GSAs where people who have the attitudes I just described choose to do it, and that's why we can't support it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Once again, we are speaking to the hoist amendment. We have 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: No, thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Anyone on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre on the hoist amendment.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm going to support the hoist amendment as I would support the bill itself, as I would support Bill 202, that the member would have brought forward.

For me, as I hear everyone's arguments, what's disturbing particularly – the emotions that some people have displayed and demonstrated are reminiscent of what I grew up with. If I take out LGBTQ and just substitute black or African-American or African-Canadian, I'm reliving the 1960s. I've seen this in the civil rights movement. I didn't understand it till I got much older, but the arguments have never changed. They're the same arguments; they're just repeating themselves. It's just another class of people that we're dealing with.

I understand what is happening here. I listened to the Premier when he brought his bill forward. Has anyone in this Assembly used the LGBTQ community for political purposes? I believe that there's a lot of guilt in this room. But the fact is that what we're trying to do is legislate ethical behaviour, moral grounds. We're trying to legislate against discrimination, and we've not figured it out yet as a society. We're still working on this.

I understand the whole issue of parental rights. I know the imperative of – I'm hearing what particularly these young children are going through, particularly the suicide rate and what these GSAs do to help prevent the suicide rate. I do not believe there is any common ground between parental rights and discrimination. It is already in the Charter, as has been mentioned.

I've been watching the media as I've been listening to the debate, and I think something that is extremely hurtful – I watched the Member for Calgary-North West get attacked in the Twittersphere and all the social media, and I've seen other people get attacked for what side of the debate they take on this, the kind of emotions that are rising up, the hatred, the vitriolic anger. Yet everybody in here is trying to in one degree or another express their concern or their opinion on how they stand against discrimination.

But nobody has really brought up the elephant in the room, which is the Catholic church and the Catholic school boards. The issue that we're dealing with here, when you actually break it out, is that we're dealing with a religious belief system – it's not just the Catholics, but they are the dominant force here with the school boards – that believes that somehow you choose to be gay. I don't know why anyone would choose to be gay. I'm sorry, but the fact is: would I choose a lifestyle given the opportunity to be totally discriminated against all the time? God forbid that I choose to be gay and First Nations. Why would you make that choice? You wouldn't make that choice.

If I had to make a choice, I'd choose a life of leisure. I get a better choice at that sometimes. Maybe I'd choose to be a young person in this Legislature's nice life of leisure. But the fact is that I don't get to make certain choices, and people who are gay and in the community of LGBTQ – that's not a choice. I can't believe that's a choice, for the life of me. I've talked it over with some of my colleagues in the room. Back when I was a child, we didn't even have any of these support systems, but we knew that some kids in schools were different, learned later in life that, okay, they were gay. Didn't know it then, but they were bullied, they were

harassed, and that's fundamentally wrong. It's illegal in our country today.

Here we are trying to bring legislation forward to improve or to at least change what is happening, to protect. How do we deal with this when you have religious belief systems that contradict that? But what's interesting is that they don't contradict the discrimination part, because if you talk to the people in charge of these school boards and if you talk to, you know, the bishops and the cardinals, they will tell you that they do not discriminate. So what are we faced with? We're faced with trying to bring legislation which is nothing more than trying to educate. The battle with discrimination is the battle against ignorance. It will never leave us as a society. It is a constant battle, and it's only winnable through education, constant education.

If you watch TV today and watch what's happened down in the United States in the community of Ferguson and the issue of dealing with African-Americans, I can show you a litany of legislation, and I can show you a litany of racism. We're dealing with that today with the gay community. We're going to try to legislate. There are claims here: the bill does nothing; I don't agree with it. It does something. It's debatable, and we're educating the public. I mean, that's one step. But it does just take a small step.

4:30

Had we mandated gay-straight alliances, I understand why that mandate would have come, but I also understand the fear and the ignorance around the arguments that it's going to promote sex or that it's going to promote a gay lifestyle. I don't know how you'd promote a gay lifestyle, to be perfectly honest. Someone's got to teach that to me someday. It's nonsensical. But it is the ignorance that we deal with in society.

How we get beyond that: the first thing that we have to do is take the emotions out of the debate, and we have to stop attacking each other in the debate and start dealing with this logically and pragmatically and understand that what we're trying to do here is not infringe on any parental rights, but what we're trying to do here is lower the suicide rate and to stop bullying. I will support any legislation that makes an attempt to lower the suicide rate among young adults, that would help stop bullying among young adults. That is a good thing, and if it just gives an inch in that travel of a journey of a mile or two miles, I'll take the inch, and then I'll want the next inch. But we've got a long way to go.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I will tell you that in this society today it's interesting that a lot of adults my age and older are all upset about this issue, but when I ask young people under 30 years old, under 25 years old they don't even know why we're discussing it. It is an issue that they have accepted for most of them.

But the issue of bullying has never left our society. If it's not the LGBTQ or First Nations or any other minority group or even dealing with women, we still see the bigotry, the racism, the ignorance, and no law can beat that. You can make it illegal, but you are talking about a behavioural change. To pass legislation, to pass rules and regulations to help get that societal, behavioural change forward, I'm all for it. To put this off six months so we can debate it further: I would support that.

If this bill goes forward, I will vote on the bill. When it goes forward, I will support it. If the other bill comes forward, I will support that. I will challenge any organization to end discrimination, and I will continue to challenge organizations to end discrimination for any reason.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing no one wishing to take that opportunity, let me move on and see if there is a member wishing to speak here. Why don't we proceed with Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Not surprisingly, I will be supporting the hoist amendment, and I will be urging all members of this Assembly to, in fact, vote against the bill. If you look at what we have here, we've introduced a bill that, in my view, does not protect children in the way they should be protected today. In my view, this Legislature has a paramount responsibility to ensure that our youth have opportunities to succeed, have opportunities in our education system, and have the opportunities to live a life where they're able to express themselves, where they're able to get the supports they need, where they're able to live those lives free from bullying.

What we have here today is that in the main we had a bill, Bill 202, that would allow for all kids in this province, regardless of whether they went to public school, Catholic school, or private school, to establish a GSA should they want one and to not have administrators or school boards get in the way of that peer support forming. These are known as gay-straight alliances, and the research has shown in numerous studies – one from the University of British Columbia, one from Egale Canada, and others – that these clubs are proven to work. They reduce suicides, suicidal thoughts, and bullying in these schools.

Let's be clear. This is a real problem. Our LGBTQ youth are suffering from suicidal thoughts at far greater rates than people who are not or not perceived to be of that community. They are committing suicide at far greater rates, sometimes at rates four times as high as other youth members compared to them, and gay-straight alliances make that reduction in those tendencies and those suicides happen. The evidence is clear. When we see that evidence out there and we see impediments to how we can better support children in our school system, we should do that, and we have not done so here today. In my view, frankly, we should be ashamed that we have not taken that opportunity to go forward on that.

I remember when I put forward Motion 503 in the spring, that would have mandated gay-straight alliances in all schools where kids want them, there was much passionate debate, and in my view the person who put it most succinctly was the Member for Calgary-Northwest, when she said:

We know that all schools in the province may not want a gay-straight alliance, but that need isn't a board's to determine; it's a student's to determine. This is not a question of religious rights, and it's not a question of sexuality as much as it is a question of the right to free speech and free assembly.

I believe that was true then, and I believe it is now, that we should have done everything possible to allow gay-straight alliances to occur.

What we have now in this government's bill, that is trying to, I guess, avoid this contentious issue in this province of trying to be supportive of our LGBTQ community, is that it keeps the status quo. We know that. Nothing will change for kids at various schools in this province in their efforts to start a gay-straight alliance. That is what we should have been doing. That should have been the paramount point of what we are trying here. We know that right now in this province school administrators will first say no; school boards will then say no. Where is the child left?

That's the interesting part of this bill. The government is actually parading around, celebrating this supposed solution to this

conundrum here today and here in this bill, and was doing so yesterday in the press. Their solution to this problem that they know is out there, that kids in many school systems, mostly Catholic and private schools, do not have the ability to form a gay-straight alliance, is: well, if your administrator says no, you can appeal it to the school board. Well, the student then goes off and appeals it to the school board, and if they say no, well, my goodness, you can appeal it to judicial review.

Well, say that a child does happen to get the funds together or gets parental support or maybe some pro bono legal help. Well, they trot off to a legal review, which we all know will look at this in the narrow confines of what school boards are set up to do and will see whether they're in the scope of their authority in the way they're acting. It may send them back, saying: "Nope. The school boards are acting as they should. They are given the authority under the School Act to act in this way, so you can't find fault with a judicial review."

Then the process for this child who wants a gay-straight alliance in his school is to trot off to Queen's Bench and to try and get this heard before a justice at that level and fight his or her or their battle at this stage. Does this seem like a solution to you, Mr. Speaker? It seems to me like an exercise in the ridiculous.

4:40

It's absurd to actually present this as an option for kids and families to try to pursue in the name of some sort of process set-up that they can follow. This is redundant, it's ridiculous, and really to offer it as a solution to Alberta's kids is, frankly, beyond the pale. This really stinks, in my view, Mr. Speaker. We keep on going down this path, this exercise in absurdity, when all these kids really want to do is set up a gay-straight alliance, and that has not been changed here today.

There are some other aspects that we have to consider here. Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act no one is allowed to be discriminated against on the basis of many things – race, religion, country of origin – and one of those is sexual orientation. That has been enshrined in our Constitution. It has been enshrined in our Alberta Human Rights Act and the like. So, these principles are laid out there. Once we accept that those principles are the law, which I think we all agree we would unless someone here can tell me otherwise, then we have to understand that, frankly, school systems' or their boards' or their administrators' opinion on sexuality or sexual orientation – it doesn't matter. They cannot hold an opinion on that fact. They can merely recognize that: look, this is not a grounds we can discriminate against kids on, so we can't do that. Okay? That's fair. That's clear. That should be a given amongst all members of this House and, frankly, all school trustees and administrators throughout the system.

So when you accept that, they can only have one option, I think, that they should look at. It's the option of what helps build healthy lives for kids. The evidence is clear that that, again, is gay-straight alliances. Once we accept that, knowing that there are school boards and school systems out there that, despite the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act being the law of the land, despite that their opinion on human sexuality is nugatory at best, still won't allow this gay-straight alliance to be formed, which we've established saves lives and reduces bullying not only for LGBTQ kids but for the entire school, and they still won't implement a GSA – well, my goodness; this government had an obligation to act and to right an injustice that is out there facing our children, and this government failed miserably today in that effect.

Really, to throw out the bogeyman of parental rights, which is now going to be enshrined in the Bill of Rights, and sexual orientation is now going to be in the Bill of Rights: well, big whoop. We all know here that that doesn't mean a tinker's darn. We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms and we have an Alberta Human Rights Act that proceed this Bill of Rights. It's window dressing at best, and it does not change the fact that we failed to make kids' lives better today. We are forcing them to jump through endless hoops and not be able to get what they want, a peer support group.

Whose rights are you really trampling on? Parental rights – you're basically choosing some version of parental rights, those who do not want GSAs, against those parents who may want a GSA. I think there are many out there who do. It was just brought up by the leader of the fourth party that she would like a GSA at her school, and her kids don't have access. So you're picking and choosing whose parental rights you're going to support, and you're really trampling on kids' rights. No one is forcing anyone to go to a gay-straight alliance. No one is saying: you will go there Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after school, and you will discuss these issues with your peers. No one is forcing anyone to do so, okay? So whose rights are you really infringing on? What complete and utter crap, Mr. Speaker. It's just simply garbage. It's a nonsensical argument that this government has trotted out, okay?

Let's talk about this. You know, much was made here about diversity clubs and things of that nature that may or may not be going on in various systems throughout the schools in Alberta. Let's think about that for a second, Mr. Speaker. You have a student who is LGBTQ. They are going through a difficult time. Discussing human sexuality is difficult for adults, much less children, and they're looking for a safe place to go discuss this issue. They get to this diversity club that's out there. What does the diversity club talk about? Well, we talk about all things diversity. We talk about racial diversity, we talk about country of origin diversity, we talk about inequality, and I'm not certain what. They probably have a multitude of issues at their diversity club.

But how safe do you think that young student who is going through this difficult time feels showing up at this club where he is not sure what, in fact, is on the agenda or who is going to be there or whether it's safe to discuss these issues. In my view, they're not. To think that this is a safe place and to trot it out like it's some sort of option for our LGBTQ students, in my view, is disingenuous. They need a gay-straight alliance with supportive peers that are mature enough, thoughtful enough, and understanding enough to give them the support they need. This government failed in that respect today, and frankly that is a disappointment.

I thought Bill 202, that was brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, would have actually finally allowed this government to turn the corner on all of it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

With no one wishing to take that up, let us, then, move on to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. You have up to 90 minutes should you wish to use it.

Ms Smith: I won't use 90 minutes, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] I know: a sigh of relief from the room.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Member for Edmonton-Centre for bringing forward Bill 202, which I was prepared to support. I think it's very unfortunate that we didn't get an opportunity to be able to debate that bill because of a procedural

manoeuvre, which I think doesn't respect the rights of all of the members in this Chamber to be able to bring forward private members' business.

I think that you can well imagine the discussions that took place in our caucus over the last week or two as we were debating this bill. I think that the Member for Airdrie helped to come to a reasonable compromise that balanced all of the rights that are under consideration here: the rights of LGBTQ students to feel safe and accepted, equality rights, the rights of parents as well as the rights of school boards, in particular religious school boards and faith-based schools, to be able to ensure that everybody's rights are protected.

I was looking forward to that debate. I was looking forward to those amendments. I've talked to the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I know that she didn't support all of them, but I think that we gave an honest effort to try to preserve the essential elements of what it is she was trying to do while still respecting that we needed to come to a conclusion on how we could better protect parental rights and religious freedom.

The three main ways in which we would have approached that would be to have removed "sexual orientation" from clause 11.1 supporting that, affirming as well that home-school families and faith-based educators would not be forced to teach something that was contrary to their beliefs. Again, I think it would have been a reasonable amendment. Importantly, if a faith-based school or a Catholic board said no to a GSA, they would have to provide some kind of counselling or support to the student in question. To me, that's absolutely essential to any bill that I can support, and it's the reason why I'll be voting against Bill 10. I don't think it preserves what the original intention of the Member for Edmonton-Centre was attempting to do.

4:50

There have been some comments made about Catholic schools and Catholic school boards. I had the great privilege of going back and forth between Catholic schools and public schools when I was in the education system. It was of great value to me, and I think I characterize the Catholic concerns a little bit differently than the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*. I think that the Pope himself – and I like this Pope – is having the same debate and discussion within his own hierarchy about how to be able to welcome members from the LGBTQ community and still be able to live within the tenets of the Catholic faith. I'm watching that with great interest, having been very close to the Catholic teachings over the course of my life. But I think we do have to respect that it is up to the Catholic school board and the Catholic schools to be able to find that balance of how to be able to reconcile those, and we can't dictate to them.

As for Bill 10, there are some things that I do support about Bill 10. Putting sexual orientation into the Bill of Rights: again, this has already been determined by the courts. It's already in our Alberta Human Rights Act. Having it in the Bill of Rights makes sense. Parental rights also being enshrined in the Bill of Rights: an excellent move for the reasons that the Member for Airdrie had said. We have a great stain on our history as a province and a country with the residential school system and the violation of parents' rights, where the state felt that they knew better than parents. I think that we make a grave error in not recognizing how important parental rights are in determining the education for a child.

Moving this section to the School Act I'm supportive of as well, but where I don't support the bill is in the treatment of the issue of a student asking for a GSA club. I agree with the members for Calgary-*Buffalo* and Edmonton-Centre that it doesn't do anything

to advance where children find themselves today, and I'll give a few stories to illustrate why I prefer the approach taken in Bill 202 as opposed to the approach taken in Bill 10.

First of all, going to Stony Plain a few nights ago, I met Rachel, a transgendered woman who actually supported the approach that we were taking by modifying Bill 202 with the amendments that we had proposed. She felt that that actually did get the right balance and would have satisfied her concerns. So I thought that that was important to know, that not every member of the LGBTQ community thinks everything has to be dealt with in exactly the same way. I think that there are members of every community who believe that this balance is important.

Secondly, of course, the Foothills school division, which overlaps the area that I represent, already have two gay-straight alliances in their schools, one in Okotoks and one in Turner Valley, so we've seen already in the community that I represent that this is something that our school boards have taken a proactive approach on, and I'm grateful for that.

The third story is that I had a constituent who called me because her transgendered son had wanted to start up a gay-straight alliance in the school that he was in, in Claresholm, and was told no. And that was just it. It was no. It was not: no, but here is what we can do instead. It was not: no, but here is another school that you can go to. The answer was just no, and that has stayed with me for a year. I've been wondering what happened to that child in being shut down by the adults in that school when he was clearly trying to reach out to find a support group. The fact that there was no answer for him – and his mother was calling me to see what I could do. I contacted Kris Wells, who teaches at the University of Alberta in the sexual minorities area, to get some advice from him. It was the first time that I came into contact with him and the group and the work that he's trying to do.

I've since been able to visit GSA clubs and talk to the kids who benefit from them, and it's moved me greatly, which is part of the reason why I support the approach that was being taken by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. One of the issues that I think is important for us to understand – and I mean this as no offence. I'm trying to speak in a way that's accepting of everybody's diverse viewpoints in here, and I know that everybody does have strong passions about it. In speaking with a Catholic school trustee at the ASBA breakfast a little while ago as they were trying to grapple with how to deal with this issue of how to accommodate gay students within a Catholic environment, they did a series of round-tables with students at high schools. I think that the adults were looking at this as just an issue of bullying, so they wanted to understand the bullying aspect of it. What the kids told them was: "We're accepted by our peers. It's the adults who don't accept us."

That, I think, is why we have to really understand: at what point does a mature youth have the ability to make their own decisions about their sexuality that don't involve their parents? At the age of 12 a child, if they've got a split home, can choose to live with mom or dad. We recognize that a child as young as 12 can choose which parent they want to live with. At age 14 they can choose to have sex as long as it's with somebody who's within a close age to them and not somebody who's in a position of authority over them. At age 16 they can become emancipated from their parents and make entire education decisions on their own. There is with these children somewhere in the age of sexual maturity, somewhere above the age of 14, when they're in high school, where they really have the ability and right to be able to make their own decisions about the kind of support that they feel they need to feel accepted.

That, to me, is what GSA clubs are about. The children that I met with who were at these GSA clubs: most of their parents didn't know that they were out yet. Most of them knew that if their parents knew, there would be some consequences to that. One individual I spoke with said that two lesbian girls had come out at her school and had been kicked out of the school. Another young boy told me that he came out to his parents, and his dad rejected him.

[Disturbance outside the gallery]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm just going to pause for a moment while we get a door closed up there. Sergeants, if you could close that door, please. We can hear some interruptions coming from there.

Sorry to interrupt you, hon. member. Please proceed.

Ms Smith: Another young woman was beaten by her father.

While I respect that we need to find a balance with parental rights and with religious freedom, I think we need to also respect that in the case of these mature youths this really is a case of life or death for some of them. We really do have a number of youths who have nowhere else to go if they're not accepted by their community, not accepted in their home environment.

It's a very confusing time to go through puberty at the best of times. These kinds of clubs are providing an opportunity for these students not just to feel safe from bullying, which is important, not just to be able to provide an avenue to be able to educate their peers but also to make sure that they can deal with the confusing thoughts that come along with what it is that they're dealing with, which is compounded by everything that kids this age are going through.

Now, these students who are going through this, who are already facing these extreme emotions: in some cases these kids are cutting themselves, they're attempting suicide, and in some cases they are actually succeeding in committing suicide. To take these kids and say that the solution when their teacher says no is to go before a school board and try to argue their case or go before a lawyer and a court and try to get a judicial decision for them to be able to set up one of these clubs: that's not reasonable, Mr. Speaker. That's not the balance that we were looking for in this bill. I think that Bill 202 found that correct balance.

5:00

I'm very hopeful that when the members are considering this bill and considering potential amendments to it – unfortunately, we don't have a lot of time to bring amendments to it – they will bring forward and support an amendment that doesn't give a school board the right to just say no when a child comes before them, will support an amendment that will create an opportunity for these kids to have some other avenue to be able to feel supported, to feel accepted, and to deal with the issues that they're dealing with.

I'm afraid that Bill 10 falls well short – well short – of what the Member for Edmonton-Centre was trying to accomplish, and I would hope that if it cannot be properly amended to be able to accommodate that, that it would be voted down so that we could go back to debating the bill that I think creates that better balance and ensures that LGBTQ students do feel accepted and don't end up on the path that so many have gone down so far.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I don't see anyone rising for 29(2)(a), so let us move on to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I'm going to cover a variety of topics, and I'm probably going to run out of time because there's much more that I have to say than in the short time that I'm allotted.

I want to just back up before I talk about Bill 10 and talk about the reason that Bill 10 came into existence. You know, I think many Albertans see it for what it really is, an attempt to torpedo Bill 202, which was a bill put forward that actually would ensure that children in schools who wanted to form GSAs could not be blocked. I've yet to hear a reasonable argument on how an extracurricular club infringes on parental rights or infringes on another student's rights. I think the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona put it quite well when she said that when a parent can stop a group of students from forming one of these clubs, then it's infringing on her right as a parent for her child to have access to this type of club.

I'm going to go through a lot of the reasons why the Alberta NDP are such strong advocates of this bill and why it was so disheartening, the actions that were displayed here yesterday, from what seemed to be an unending stream of points of privilege to eat the clock to the fact that when a vote was passed – it was unanimously passed in this House, Mr. Speaker, yet members from the other side decided to force a standing vote, therefore eating another 10 minutes into the time and, essentially, shutting down any discussion that was going to happen on Bill 202. Honestly, I can say that that was the most undemocratic action I've ever seen in this House, not only in my time as a member but as a person who has lived for 39 years in this province.

I want to bring up a variety of points here. Again, I'm not quite sure how a gay-straight alliance, because it's voluntary and it's student driven, is somehow infringing on the rights of others, whether it's parental rights or student rights. My mind has gone through numerous clubs that students start up in a school. If a school board tried to block an antiracist club or a club supporting students in any other way, there would be outrage, and that board's decision would be overturned very quickly. Yet for some reason when we talk about the rights of students regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, those rights are not equal to other rights. I don't understand it. I think it's wrong, Mr. Speaker.

The other part – and I am going to be all over the map, and I apologize for that. The fact that Bill 10 supposedly brings forward rights in incremental steps is quite absurd, Mr. Speaker. When you look at any rights that have been won in the history of this world, they have never been done incrementally. You know, I think of the examples of Rosa Parks or Dr. Martin Luther King. They didn't win rights incrementally or partially or that some people could or that a half a person could or an inch of the way. When women earned the right to vote in this country, it wasn't only a handful of women; it was women. It was all or nothing.

If we are wanting to get to the root of this bill, which is what I want to talk about – I mean, this isn't about parental rights. This isn't about religious views. We're talking about introducing a piece of legislation which will protect our students, which will protect our youth. We're talking about antibullying. Despite the fact that we can talk about different clubs that exist, there are none that are as effective at dealing with bullying and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity than GSAs. There is proof from around the world that GSAs work.

What frustrates me is the fact that you're now setting up a system where if a GSA is blocked by a school, the student can take this to the school board, which I find kind of ironic. Would

they come back and say: "Did you change your mind?" "No." "Okay. Now I've got to take you to court or a judicial review." We're telling our young people that if you want this, you've got to jump through these hoops, you've got to expend money and time in order to try to take a board to court to prove that they're wrong and it's your inalienable right. It just seems so ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. It's unbelievable, and I think Albertans are flabbergasted at that part of Bill 10, which is ridiculous, quite honestly.

I want to talk a little bit because I feel like I need to educate some of the members in this House as far as the reasons for GSAs and their value. So let me just tell you, starting off in 2011, that a report by a Canadian advocacy group called Egale found 21 per cent of LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their sexual orientation, and more than half reported having been verbally harassed. Almost half of gay, lesbian, bisexual students and 75 per cent of transgendered students have experienced verbal harassment about their sexual orientation or gender expression at school. Studies show that LGBTQ teens experience greater levels of violence and more negative health outcomes than their heterosexual peers. Twenty-four per cent of harassed students report lower grades; 27 per cent report higher absentee rates; 55 per cent report greater depression; 35 per cent are more likely to make plans to commit suicide.

Those numbers, to me, are staggering. When you have a tool or a club that decreases those numbers and provides for a safe and inclusive space, it seems like a no-brainer to me, Mr. Speaker, that we as provincial representatives and Legislatures would do everything in our power to ensure students are safe in our schools. I mean, this is what it comes down to. It's not these other arguments that have been set up. I would argue that the Premier himself has pitted and created this dichotomy, this imaginary argument of one side versus another, when what we're talking about is an extracurricular school club that gives students the tools to feel safe in their schools, to feel supported. They work toward combating bullying and discrimination.

I don't understand it, Mr. Speaker. I've had students write letters and send e-mails asking me to try to explain the rationale of Bill 10 and why this government torpedoed Bill 202, and I can't. I don't think members on the other side either can provide a rational explanation of how an extracurricular club that's voluntary infringes on the rights of other students, when they're nowhere near that club if they don't want to participate in it.

5:10

I do want to point out a couple of things which may come as a surprise, Mr. Speaker. I was thrilled to learn that there are other jurisdictions in this great country of ours that have GSAs which exist in both public and Catholic schools. That may come as a shock to some. But, hey, believe me, it's true. Ontario and Manitoba both have legislation that mandates that all students in all public and separate Catholic school boards are allowed to form GSAs if they want to. For some reason for the folks in Ontario this doesn't contravene or contradict their religious beliefs.

You know, there's a part of me that feels as a – I want to mention in this Assembly that I myself am a Catholic, Mr. Speaker. I see no conflict between students starting GSAs in Catholic schools or rural schools or any school. This isn't even about singling out one or another. This is about all schools. If students have the desire to form a GSA, they should be allowed.

I do want to commend some of the work that many folks have done moving this forward. You know, I will give kudos, first and foremost, to the Member for Edmonton-Centre for bringing this up and even her predecessor. Last year we had a great debate on

Motion 503 from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. I do want to congratulate and thank the members of this House who were in favour of Bill 202 and opposed to this toothless bill that's just really meant to sidetrack the conversation and, well, quite clearly, just to take out any strength or ability or protection that would have been given to students.

Also and especially I want to thank the students of this province who have the courage and have had the courage to step forward in spite of adversity and challenges and the potential of public shaming to voice their beliefs and to fight for something that is, I believe, so important when we talk about protecting the rights of our children, the rights of our students, and the fundamental human rights that all Canadians deserve to enjoy.

I will mention – and I am going to try to keep this fairly short. I know there are other speakers that want to get up. Due to the fact that the government in their move to make this Assembly more democratic invoked closure . . . [interjection] Well, there is a two-hour limit on this current bill, is there not, Mr. Speaker?

An Hon. Member: Not yet.

Mr. Bilous: Okay. It has not been invoked yet. All right. Then I withdraw that last comment. Fair enough. I got my back up there a little pre-emptively. I'm sorry, government members. However, I won't be surprised if it crops up at some point between now and third reading.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I think the point of this is that the whole thrust behind the bill – and I know that there are some gestures in this bill as far as removing section 11.1 that the government has made, which we were opposed to when it was first introduced. I appreciate that gesture. But, really, this comes down to: what tools are we giving to students to ensure that they are protected in our schools? Bill 10 I cannot support because it does not protect the very students that it claims to protect. Therefore, I support the hoist motion put forward, that this bill needs to not get read for six months hence. Let's bring forward legislation that truly respects and protects the identities of all students in this province.

I'll tell you one last thing, Mr. Speaker. I've never liked the word "tolerant" or "tolerance". To me that's putting up with something that you don't like, like tolerating a dirty car or tolerating, you know, something that you don't appreciate. The point is that we don't tolerate one another. We don't hold our nose and put up with them. If we want to truly respect diversity and inclusiveness, then we need to celebrate our differences in who we are and not white wash them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I don't see anyone rising under 29(2)(a).

Are there any other speakers? I see Calgary-Mountain View, and then after that, I have the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark on the list. That's all I have for the moment.

Hon. member, please proceed.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. An honour and a privilege I do take seriously to stand and speak to Bill 10 and the specific amendment to hoist the bill as a result of some of the, I guess, lack of confidence that one has developed over the last 24 hours in not only the legislative process, as it's been diverted and subverted by this government, but also on the basis that I think the Member for Calgary-Northwest, who proposed Bill 10, herself believes that there needs to be a lot more discussion, a lot more understanding, not only in the public but in this Legislature, about what we mean by human rights, what we mean by gender and sexual orientation and sexual education. She herself indicated that

there is a lot of confusion and a lot ambiguity about what it is we're about here.

I will revert briefly to the Premier's throne speech, in which he repeatedly said and has said in the press: this government is under new management. That was a profound comment to me, that he believes that all we need is new management rather than leadership. What this province needs is new leadership – a vision, values, a commitment to a longer term, sustainable province – which includes real honouring of human rights, a government that not only talks about human rights but demonstrates it in their actions and in their process here in the Legislature and in their actions outside this Legislature, a government that actually lives their commitment to putting children first. There's an interesting phrase we hear repeatedly, and here again it comes into question because we're not putting children first. We're not even putting human rights first. We're putting some authority first.

There's some confusion here about what human rights are and what we need to do to protect those human rights. It's not unlike what we've seen over the last hundred years across the planet, where voting rights and legitimacy of ethnic communities and women's rights and First Nations' rights gradually, step-by-step, got included in our legislation.

Here we are at another impasse because there is a resistance among certain groups to honour sexual orientation as a human right: oh, yes, we'll put it in somewhere, and potentially we'll honour it, but there has to be balance. What is this balance that we're looking for? Is there protection or isn't there? We're looking for leadership, and we're not seeing it. In fact, we saw the subversion yesterday of a legitimate bill, 202, that tried to ensure that all of us would not have to deal with decisions around this because the decision was made in our Charter of Rights.

Sitting in the gallery today is the Farmworkers Union, who has for 10 years asked for the same basic human right, and this government continues to deny it because it's optional. All other working groups get occupational health and safety, guaranteed compensation if they get injured, labour code standards, even child labour standards, but not the farm workers because this government is really confused about human rights. How is it that this government can look at itself in the mirror every day, can speak to its constituents as standing up for human rights, being pillars of democracy, and continue to do this, to say that human rights are optional? "Some human rights we will honour and defend; other human rights we will decide on balance. How will this affect our bottom line if we honour this commitment to human rights? How will this affect our voters if we impose a gay-straight alliance on schools?"

Why are we considering political impact when we're talking about human rights? This is the 21st century. It's unbelievable that we are dealing with this in such a contentious way and honouring some opinions over the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bill 202 enabled all schools to have some kind of a group, whether they call it gay-straight or some other name, to honour our commitment to children first: their safety, their health, their well-being, their empowerment, their freedom to speak, their freedom to assemble. Does this government even realize that they're limiting their freedom to assemble?

5:20

They are limiting farm workers' ability to assemble. Is that an option? It appears to be an option. This government has legislated against farm workers' freedom to assemble. They cannot by law form a union. This is 19th-century stuff. I'm glad the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour is here because this is his bailiwick. I know he stands for human rights. I've seen him on the

streets of Calgary. We've stood together on some important issues of human rights, and I look forward to his leadership, not management but leadership, on the issue of farm worker rights in this province and to setting a new tone, setting a new, I would say, image for Alberta that we're not foot-draggers, that we're not being dragged into the 21st century, that we are actually trying to lead in a responsible and inspiring way and that our children will be inspired by what we do.

We know that there is a pinnacle here called the Charter, and it has to do with human rights and dignity, the democratic process, the right to assemble, the right to free speech, and our commitment to try to create safe, caring communities, especially for our young people with gender identity issues and with sexual orientation confusion, who desperately need to feel respected, feel some openness, especially among this adult community. If we don't set the tone for this, who's going to do it? We lead with these decisions, and we're dragging our feet in this instance. Teachers and school boards are looking for leadership.

Yes, there will be some resistance. There always is resistance to change, especially around human rights and human dignity, even free speech and, obviously, even freedom of assembly. Young people are basically saying: "What's the problem here, folks? Why are we giving the jurisdiction, the decision-making power, to an elected body of people when this is a fundamental of Canadian society, a Charter right?"

Who is threatened by honouring our commitment to human rights? Who is threatened? If they're threatened, maybe there's a good reason for that, and we need to challenge the fact that some people are threatened by the freedom of young people to gather and talk about sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender ambiguity. This government is inventing a conflict because they're pandering to a political base. Very disappointing.

You know what is the right thing to do. This province is looking for the kind of bold, courageous leadership that the Member for Edmonton-Centre was trying to bring about here. Would you say the same about a group that wanted to start a Christian organization in the school? "Oh, we would leave that up to the discretion of the school board." Or if we want to start a multicultural group? "Oh, we'll leave that up to the discretion of a school board." No. There's something very sensitive and very special about sexuality, and we're still struggling with 1930s, 1940s attitudes in some areas of the province.

They're actually looking for the kind of leadership that this government could give to allow there to be no ambiguity, that it's going to be challenged if you try and block people from associating, if you try and block people, especially young people, from talking about their confusion and their sensitivities and the dangers around gender ambiguity or gender identification and sexuality. We're looking for leadership. I know this government wants to be effective leaders. I know they do. That's why they got elected. Here's an opportunity in this amendment to lift this for six months, to compromise on their desire to always win the vote, to win the bill.

Consider putting children first. Consider making human rights the pre-eminent decision in this. Consider hoisting this bill to allow for the dust to settle, the emotion to settle, and for debates and discussions to go on all across the province, and allow that to come to the fore in six months' time. Let's then have the fulsome debate and, potentially, the changes that we all want. Not new management but new leadership.

This is an example of something that looks like a 1940s decision, and you have an opportunity to show 2014 leadership. Where other provinces are today, we could jump right into that leadership role. We want an inclusive society. We say that we are

committed to open accountability, inclusiveness, tolerance. I say that we want empowered youth who feel confident in themselves regardless of their sexual orientation, regardless of certain voices in the back of their head and certain voices in their community that say: "You're not good enough. You're weird. You're a faggot. You're whatever, and we're not going to accept you." This is a time for real leadership to say: "Hey, everybody, this is something we stand for. Children first. Human rights, top of the agenda. We're not going to compromise on this – sorry – even though some of you and some particular religions will be uncomfortable with it. We are not going to set the bar there. We're going to set the bar up here. You're going to come there, and we're going to have debates and discussions, but we're going to get there and not in the 22nd century but in the 21st century."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing no one, let us move on to the next speaker. I would go to the Official Opposition in the rotation.

If not, let us move on to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to certainly support this hoist motion. I think that it's probably the best idea. We saw a lot of very heightened emotions yesterday, and I think we've seen quite a lot of poor decision-making on a leadership level in regard to how this PC government has handled this situation.

I think it's very important, when you do have a very large, changing, pluralistic society and you have a considerable majority, that you exercise that majority with caution because if you do in fact revert to old sort of muscle memory of how you always had governed and behaved as a ruling party, then sometimes that is inappropriate. We have a very sensitive situation here, a very symbolic situation, where we're not just talking about gay-straight alliances. We're talking about the capacity for a majority government to govern for everybody.

On that very large level I thought we saw a categorical failure here yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking as constructively as possible on this, too, because I know what the reality is here in this province. You know, I wasn't born yesterday. I know that we have a situation where there is a very strong Conservative, virtually a one-party state that has existed and has exerted its control over this province for many, many decades. We're not going to change that wholesale overnight, but we certainly do need to and can change the way by which that very large power is exerted over all of the citizens here in this province. We're not just fighting for gay-straight alliances here. We're fighting for the capacity of people to make reasonable assertions that are in the best interests of both mental health and societal health and reflect the values that are changing rapidly in our province without having to be heavy handed and mean spirited.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as you were as well, I was a teacher for more than 20 years, and I look at this as a very succinct teaching moment. [interjection] Oh, yeah. I taught for 20 years. Absolutely. I always look for teaching moments. I still consider myself to be a teacher.

It's not just about having a legal space for someone to form a gay-straight alliance in a school or about a school board or a place where maybe they are opposing that at some administrative level, but this is also a way to teach every single person who pays attention to this issue about equality and social justice and the capacity to accommodate differences in our society.

5:30

So you say, “Well, you know, we changed 11.1 in this act, and we made adjustments here,” and that’s all good. I mean, I’m not opposed to the evolutionary process of reform as well. But just as strongly the undercurrent message here, the subtext of a message that was presented here, was: we will use and employ legal power and just raw political power to compromise the clarity of our commitment to gay-straight alliances so that some school boards can continue, either tacitly or explicitly, to exclude gay-straight alliances from the schools in the jurisdictions which they are responsible for. Business as usual, basically, right? I just really find that a little bit – not just offensive, but I think, as I said before, it’s missing that opportunity to have that teaching moment.

Other people will look at that as well and say: “Well, you know, the government pushed and shoved them. The PC government will always come down on the conservative, right-wing side of things, so we can always pull strings to make sure that we get what we want if you are of that persuasion.” Again, that’s not really good democracy. It’s just people thinking that they have a government in their back pocket, that the right-wing side of the equation can be tilted at any time: “We can make the deal. We can make it happen like we want it to be.” That’s not fair.

I would say that Bill 10 reflects the values and the desires of quite a small minority, actually, here in the province of Alberta, not even explicitly in terms of gay-straight alliances but explicitly in terms of a live-and-let-live attitude and a sort of libertarian idea that people can mind their own business and that the government has no business in regard to being discriminatory towards one’s sexuality and other things like that. In 2014 that is a predominant majority sentiment in societies such as ours. Again, Bill 10, sort of hastily cobbled together more for political reasons than actual practical reasons, is out of step with how the vast majority of Albertans feel and the attitudes that they share with themselves and with their families.

Yeah, of course people can have their own religious views on things, and they can have their own societal and cultural views on things, but you don’t have discriminatory views on things and think that we can actually enshrine those in law. I think that’s a message we should be sending out of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, and that’s not really explicitly what we’re doing here.

We know that on a sociological level, on a school-wide level in terms of a teaching level these sort of peer support groups are very, very important, and we’ve learned over a long period of time that peer support and student-initiated ways of teaching things and helping each other are the most effective teaching tools of all. When I heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on the radio yesterday – time flies when you’re having fun, so to speak – and she used the words “peer support” over and over again, I thought that was so incredibly appropriate in looking at this from a pedagogical standpoint and from a teaching moment, right? I know for a fact that student-initiated direction in these things is just so much more powerful than anything that a teacher could come up with.

I mean, I could come up with a social justice club or something like that, and I’ve done it before in teaching in the past. But, you know, was it student initiated? Well, it became that after a while, but it started out with me, right? I was treading against the water and paddling upstream, and it wasn’t effective. But if the kids come up with something like a social justice club or democratic elections for student council and stuff like that, it takes off like wildfire, and it becomes a much wider teaching opportunity, right?

So with student-led GSAs, I mean, it’s not like we’re mandating. I know that this has been another subtext, which is so

wrong on this whole debate, you know, that we’re going to make a law forcing people to have gay-straight alliances in schools. Well, I don’t think so. If the students want to organize one, then, yeah, they can do so, right? They can do so, and we will protect them to allow them to do so, and there’s nothing wrong with that.

I mean, a choice that somebody makes – I heard it earlier this afternoon – to have a gay-straight alliance in a school doesn’t affect other people, nor should they stick their noses into that, quite frankly. Right? I mean, if there are some teachers that don’t like it or if there are some administrators that don’t like it or a school board or whatever, well, too bad. I mean, it’s not as though you have a GSA that is otherwise imposing their will on the school. You have a peer support network in a club that people can choose to join or not join. There’s nothing sort of subversive about that. In fact, it’s very progressive. You know, it’s reflecting a cultural phenomenon that we’re seeing in schools over the last number of years.

Like I said, really, I haven’t been teaching full-time now for a decade, since I’ve been a legislator and so forth, but it’s happened during that time frame. When I left teaching full-time, GSAs weren’t around, and now they are, I think, as the minister tabled today, in at least 94 schools around the province and growing fast. Most of those are in places where the school board has given that space to encourage GSAs. If they don’t, then people are scared. I mean, it’s authority, and people exert their authority through the school board tacitly or explicitly, and you won’t see GSAs in a place where a school board says no. I mean, it’s just not going to happen.

It’s not like kids are equipped with legal advice and lawyers in their back pocket. That’s a phenomenon that is very rare and very expensive, too. For someone to actually challenge a school board to allow a GSA would be at least \$25,000 to \$35,000, I would say, to mount a legal challenge. I mean, that’s a pretty rarified world. Whoever came up with that idea, the Premier perhaps, lives in – I don’t know. To think you can have legal counsel at your beck and call and \$30,000 to go for a legal challenge. I mean, that’s what we do here in the Legislature, make those laws so that you don’t have to have this mixed-up, convoluted sort of legal conflict on a basic human right.

Mr. Speaker, that’s my feeling on this. Certainly, you know, we talked a lot already about the sociological benefits of these GSAs. It’s very interesting how it’s been tracked. I’ve been really quite amazed at how successful it’s been in schools and how much more widespread it could be if we allowed that space to continue here through the Legislature.

Based on that, I certainly support this hoist for now. You know, I don’t judge people on a single issue. I judge them on an accumulation of their actions at the time. Certainly, I know that there are some good people over on this side that would like to see us do the right thing. I’m surprised, very happily surprised, to see the public’s reaction to this. It’s not just a reaction on gay-straight alliances. It’s a reaction, like I said at the outset of my comments, on the capacity of a large-majority Conservative government to exert fair and equitable legislation that doesn’t discriminate and appear heavy handed towards minorities. That’s part of why I was so upset yesterday, and I still kind of am today.

I also know that there are lots of good people over on the other side that will concur with that idea and will vote appropriately, I’m sure. I mean, this is not a threat, right? I know that I can smell some threatening language over there. That’s not the way we should conduct ourselves, I don’t think. You know, I often think of that Shakespearean line about thou “doth protest too much,” when I hear someone over there speaking very, very loudly, louder than you need to considering we’re miked here, about how

much they really love this political thing that's going on here when, in fact, I know that they must be feeling very, very conflicted considering how this has all come out in the wash.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I certainly encourage everyone to support the hoist. Thank you very much.

5:40

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see no one rising. Anyone from this side or that side?

Then the next speaker on the list I have is the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the hoist motion on Bill 10. I can't believe that we're actually having to have these discussions in 2014 in what is the best place, the best province in the best country in the world. You know, I just want to talk to you about the history of our country. In 1906 my grandfather came to this country at the age of 17. In 1908 the government, or the law, said that people of Indian origin couldn't come to this country anymore. They brought in the Continuous Passage Act. You had to come from your country of origin directly to this country, and only one ship made that journey, a government ship, and they changed the journey.

In 1914, Mr. Speaker, my great-grandmother's brother was on a ship called *Komagata Maru*. They challenged Canadian exclusionary laws, discriminatory laws directly aimed at one class of individuals. The ship was turned back, and it was not a warm reception when they got back home.

Mr. Speaker, in 1917 women were finally allowed the right to vote, and I believe that it was about 1929 when they were considered real persons. People from other countries didn't get a chance to vote until after the world wars, and First Nations, the people on whose land we reside, didn't get the chance to vote until the '60s.

Mr. Speaker, I remember coming to this country in 1972. Many of us who are from other countries, who are visibly different or talk differently, know what discrimination is like. The first week was one black eye, and the next week was another black eye, and you learned how to defend yourself. Frankly, I asked my parents as a child: why did you bring me to this country just to get beaten up every week? It was very scary having to go to school, finding a different way, and trying to sneak back home so you wouldn't get beaten up. Well, I sort of got toughened.

You know, I grew up in a war-torn country postpartition. I was already a tough kid, and after about 10 fights I learned how to defend myself and get back up. Then the rest of the time, Mr. Speaker, I spent my time at the playgrounds, standing in front of the kid that was queer, the kid that was gay, the kid that was fat, the girl whom people teased, because bullies would pick on these poor children in the playground, and I happened to be one of the tough kids. I didn't like fighting, but I had no trouble standing in front of somebody who needed some protection and defence in the playground from elementary to my high school days.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that as an inner-city emergency room doctor I've seen countless children – the health care staff will tell you – countless young people. Mental health rates right now are going through the roof: the suicide attempts, the despair, the overdoses. More than 60,000 children are suffering from mental health issues, and there's a big stigma attached to it. I'll tell you that we've seen countless people from the LGBTQ community, young children who've slashed their wrists, who've overdosed because they were outcast from their families and their communities because they considered this a shameful thing.

Mr. Speaker, for these children their only recourse if their family doesn't accept the way they're born is their peer group, which is usually at school. It's usually your teachers, your parents, or your peer group, which is your social circle. So at school you form peer groups. You know, it could be the chess group, it could be the sports group, it could be the geek group or a certain religion or – hey – it could be a certain culture. These children want the ability to talk about their issues, that are unique to them, and these are very unique issues.

When you're a teenager, sexual identity – it's a very confusing time. Well, I remember that it was a tough time with, you know, my own sexuality. I think we all struggle with those kinds of things and hormones when you're a teenager to begin with. But imagine if you're from the LGBTQ community and with every other stress that you have in life, stresses of your family struggling to pay the bills, of poverty and single parents, imagine that you add this on top of that.

The hon. member from the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, her Bill 502 was really about protecting our children, giving them the freedom . . .

Ms Blakeman: Bill 202.

Dr. Sherman: Bill 202. Sorry. I stand corrected.

Giving these children the freedom of the right to create their own little social support group in the school where and when they felt that they needed it, that's all it was about.

Now, the reason we have to hoist this bill is because the Premier, with all due respect, is wrong. I don't think he's suffered the type of discrimination these children and many others have suffered, and that's why he's wrong. He doesn't get what these kids go through.

Mr. Speaker, imagine this. Young people want to assemble. Bill 10 is asking these same young people to go to the very people – the parents, the community, and the school boards – that they're actually fearful of, that they feel ostracized by, to ask them: will you allow us to assemble? Bill 10 not only asks them to do that to the very people they don't want to tell they're a lesbian or gay or bisexual, to adults who are going to drag them off to get a medical fix because there's something wrong with them, allegedly, according to some people – these children are born this way.

They are actually telling these children: "No. If the school board doesn't work for you and you've outed yourself in your community and now you're really alone, go to the court system. Go get a lawyer." The Premier may be a very wealthy lawyer who made a few million dollars a year working for a bank, but you tell me which young student is going to have the money, the family support, the community support to raise that kind of money to go to the court system to get the ability to just hang out with their friends and have their own group. This is a grassroots, student-led issue.

Mr. Speaker, my son just made a film for the city of Edmonton. It's called *Through My Eyes*. The City of Edmonton Youth Council under the mayor's guidance wants the issues of First Nations and homelessness, especially youth homelessness, to end. I'm so proud of my son and the young people that he made this film with. You know, there were packed houses at the university theatre just a week or two ago. I didn't even know this, but of the hundreds of youth that are homeless, 50 per cent are actually from the LGBTQ community – 50 per cent – and the majority of the youths that are homeless are also from the First Nations community and low-income families.

Fifty per cent of all homeless youth – they've got no houses to stay in – these children said that they don't want to live on the

north end of the river because they're fearful they're going to lose their lives on the north end of the river. They already have been kicked out of their community and their families, and they're living on the streets south of the river. They're not living near Whyte Ave to have a good time. They want a home, they want a family, they want to be accepted, and they want dignity, human dignity.

Mr. Speaker, what we're really talking about is human rights, human rights of our children, young people. What makes us a great country is what happened in 1993, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees us inalienable rights to walk freely in this country, to have freedom of speech, freedom to assemble – and these freedoms also come with responsibility – without being discriminated against and treated horribly. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms lays out the protections all Canadians have from discrimination based on religion and sex, which the Supreme Court has extended to sexual orientation.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta Liberals want to protect the rights of all minorities, but the Premier is intent on playing one minority group against another by shifting focus off the Charter and onto the Alberta Bill of Rights. The guiding principles of this country are under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So I wonder what it is about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that the Premier and his PC government will not support.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier likes to talk about his record on human rights. The Premier's record is no different than all other conservatives, dragging your feet until you're forced by the Supreme Court of this country to recognize what every other province has accepted years ago.

Recently references to the Charter and Education Act were removed, between drafting Bill 2 and Bill 3, in favour of the common beliefs and values of Albertans. The Premier has been out of the province and in Ontario for quite a while. So perhaps he may have a unique perspective and can tell us, but I also wonder: how, exactly, are the beliefs and values of other Canadians different from those of Albertans?

Mr. Speaker, school boards that don't want to allow gay-straight alliances essentially want students to conform to their systems rather than having to accommodate them. Bill 202 would have provided safe and inclusive schools that respect diversity, all diversity, and the Premier's plan only maintains the status quo, which gives the boards a veto and forces our children to go to the court system. The fact is that LGBTQ students have a constitutional right to be free from this sort of discrimination. That's the fact. So, again, I wonder why the Premier wants vulnerable teenagers to have to go get expensive lawyers and out themselves to the very community they feel that they are not welcome to and accepted by.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has come a long way. We have, and I ask that members in the government – please. You have the majority of the votes. We don't on this side, in the progressive parties. You have the majority of the votes. We've come so far.

You know, I remember coming to this province in 1984. I became a Christian, and I was at a Baptist camp in Caroline, Alberta. Those were the days the KKK were burning crosses in Alberta, and there were hate rallies in this province. I was there, just a few miles away from Eckville and, oh, gosh, some other town out near Eckville, where some folks were denying the Holocaust, very discriminatory stuff.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in 1994 a teacher who was homosexual was doing his job, and he was fired. He was fired for being a human being, for being himself. It went to the Supreme Court of the land,

and the Supreme Court of the land said that sexual orientation is under the protections of this country. The last I checked, Alberta is in the country of Canada. We operate under the supreme law of the land of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has had some bad times and dark times in our history when it comes to human rights and protecting the rights of minorities. The whole point of democracy, my dear friends on the government side, is that it's the duty of the majority to protect the minority, and that's the greatness of democracy. In other parts of the world the majority stamp on the minority, and that's what makes Canada the greatest country in which to live.

Mr. Speaker, we have one, just one, little hurdle to go. We're so close. This is the best province in the best country in the world, but I think we are capable of so much more. I believe if we actually allow our young people from the LGBTQ community to have their gay-straight alliances and if we move section 11.1 into the Education Act, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre had originally suggested, we can get on to the business of what we really need to do, which is provide Albertans the services they need, protect our economy, balance the books, and put money in the bank.

Really, we have to improve Alberta's reputation on human rights. This is about the safety of our children. If we as a civilized society are not going to protect the human rights of young, vulnerable children, many who end up homeless on the streets, whose suicide attempt rates and suicide rates and depression rates are higher than the norm, then what are the values that we stand upon as a people and as a province?

Mr. Speaker, it seems as though new management is doing the same old thing. Their concern is more for political expediency versus doing the right thing. I urge the members on the government side. You have the majority of the numbers until the next election. I ask you to please, please do the right thing. There are many of you. I don't believe there's one homophobic member in this Legislature. I believe we are all united in protecting human rights. We just have to enshrine them in legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I would like to make a motion that any bells that we have at this point but also for the rest of the evening after the break be shortened to one minute.

The Speaker: Hon. members, my interpretation of what the Government House Leader has just said is that the time between the original summoning of the bells and the second summoning be curtailed or brought down to one minute. Is that the intention, hon. Government House Leader?

Mr. Denis: Actually, I'll correct myself: just until adjournment at 6 p.m., Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. Government House Leader. I was talking while you were talking, so could you just tell me what it is that you have in mind for this motion?

Mr. Denis: Please accept my apologies, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry. I'd like to rise and ask for unanimous consent of the Chamber that if there are any standing bells prior to the break, they be at a one-minute interval and not 10.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: So there will be a one-minute interval between the ringing of the two bells.

Now, under 29(2)(a) is there anyone else here?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the hoist amendment, known as H1?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment H1 lost]

The Speaker: We will immediately put the question on second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:57 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allen	Dirks	Lemke
Amery	Donovan	Leskiw

Anderson	Drysdale	Luan
Anglin	Ellis	McDonald
Bhullar	Fawcett	McIver
Brown	Fritz	McQueen
Calahasen	Goudreau	Olson
Campbell	Griffiths	Pedersen
Cao	Hale	Sandhu
Casey	Jansen	Scott
Cusanelli	Johnson, J.	Starke
Dallas	Johnson, L.	Weadick
DeLong	Kennedy-Glans	Woo-Paw
Denis	Kubinec	Xiao

Against the motion:

Bilous	Lukaszuk	Sherman
Blakeman	Mason	Smith
Eggen	Notley	Wilson
Kang		

Totals:	For – 42	Against – 10
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[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:03 p.m.]

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Other inquiries:

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