



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

Issue 26

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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

Allen, Mike, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)  
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)  
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie (PC)  
Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (Ind)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)  
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
New Democrat Opposition Whip  
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),  
Liberal Opposition House Leader  
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (PC)  
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)  
Campbell, Hon. Robin, West Yellowhead (PC)  
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)  
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)  
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)  
Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),  
Government House Leader  
Dirks, Hon. Gordon, Calgary-Elbow (PC)  
Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (PC)  
Dorward, Hon. David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)  
Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND),  
New Democrat Opposition House Leader  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Fawcett, Hon. Kyle, Calgary-Klein (PC)  
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)  
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W),  
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Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (PC)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)  
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)  
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (PC)  
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)  
Horne, Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)  
Johnson, Hon. Jeff, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (PC)  
Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)  
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),  
Liberal Opposition Whip  
Kennedy-Glans, Donna, QC, Calgary-Varsity (PC)  
Khan, Hon. Stephen, St. Albert (PC)  
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Kubinec, Hon. Maureen, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (PC)  
Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)  
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)  
Lukaszuk, Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)  
Mandel, Hon. Stephen, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC)  
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND)  
McAllister, Bruce, Chestermere-Rocky View (PC)  
McDonald, Hon. Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
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Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)  
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)  
Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (PC)  
Prentice, Hon. Jim, PC, QC, Calgary-Foothills (PC),  
Premier  
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)  
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)  
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Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)  
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Scott, Hon. Donald, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL),  
Liberal Opposition Whip  
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (PC)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL),  
Leader of the Liberal Opposition  
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (PC)  
VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC),  
Government Whip  
Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (PC)  
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)  
Vacant, Battle River-Wainwright  
Vacant, Spruce Grove-St. Albert

## Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 70      Wildrose: 5      Alberta Liberal: 5      New Democrat: 4      Independent: 1      Vacant: 2

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

## **Executive Council**

Jim Prentice	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Manmeet Singh Bhullar	Minister of Infrastructure
Robin Campbell	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Jonathan Denis	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Gordon Dirks	Minister of Education
David Dorward	Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Wayne Drysdale	Minister of Transportation
Kyle Fawcett	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Jeff Johnson	Minister of Seniors
Stephen Khan	Minister of Service Alberta
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Human Services
Maureen Kubinec	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Stephen Mandel	Minister of Health
Everett McDonald	Associate Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Ric McIver	Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour
Diana McQueen	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Frank Oberle	Minister of Energy
Verlyn Olson	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Donald Scott	Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education
Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Amery  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Stier

Barnes	Quadri
Dallas	Rogers
Eggen	Rowe
Fox	Sarich
Hehr	Starke
Kennedy-Glans	Towle
Luan	

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Casey  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Mason
Barnes	Sherman
Ellis	Smith
Lukaszuk	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Olesen  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Barnes

Cusanelli	Quest
Eggen	Rodney
Fenske	Sandhu
Fox	Strankman
Fritz	Swann
Leskiw	Weadick
Pedersen	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Jeneroux  
Deputy Chair: Dr. Brown

Blakeman	Saskiw
DeLong	Strankman
Eggen	Wilson
Leskiw	Young
Quadri	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky  
Deputy Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

Forsyth	Mason
Fritz	McAllister
Hale	Sherman
Johnson, L.	Strankman
Lukaszuk	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mrs. Leskiw  
Deputy Chair: Ms Cusanelli

Allen	Jablonski
Barnes	Olesen
Bilous	Rowe
Brown	Stier
DeLong	Swann
Fenske	Xiao
Fritz	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Luan  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rogers

Bilous	Pedersen
Calahasen	Rodney
Casey	Saskiw
Ellis	Starke
Kang	Stier
Olesen	Wilson
Pastoor	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Saskiw  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Young

Allen	Horne
Anderson	Jansen
Anglin	Jeneroux
Barnes	Luan
Bilous	Pastoor
Donovan	Sarich
Hehr	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Goudreau  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Strankman

Allen	Hale
Bikman	Johnson, L.
Blakeman	Mason
Brown	Stier
Calahasen	Xiao
Cao	Young
Fraser	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us pray. Heavenly Father, help us to understand the needs of others and to speak up for those whose voices may be in the minority, and guide us always in our deliveries on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Let us begin with school groups. Let's go to Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Young:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you 35 visitors from Lendrum school. They are joined by their teachers Ms Andrews and Ms Aucoin as well as parent helpers Ms Andrew and Mrs. Banham. I had a wonderful opportunity to speak with them today and saw them at Read In Week, and they wanted to know what colour my socks were today, so they really appreciated my Read In Week talk. I ask them all to rise today and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members a group of 98 visitors from Richard Secord elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They comprise four grade 6 classes. They're an exceptional group of students. I'm very, very proud to have them in the Legislature. I'd ask all members to join me in giving them a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Are there other school or education groups?

If not, let us move on to other important guests. We have at least 15 on the list, so I would ask you to be as brief and succinct as possible.

Let us start with the Associate Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. I believe you have two separate introductions. Please proceed with both of them.

**Mr. McDonald:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a young Albertan who shows great leadership in her community and has been recognized for her outstanding contributions to Alberta's 4-H. Jess Verstappen of High Prairie is a 2014 recipient of the 4-H Premier's award. Miss Verstappen spent five years as a member of the Coyote Acres 4-H Club in High Prairie, where she has held all the positions, from president, vice-president, and treasurer. She has served as a role model for her community and her 4-H club, and I have no doubt that she has a wonderful future as she heads into her pursuits in environmental sciences at Lakeland College. Miss Verstappen is accompanied by Leila Hickman, one of our specialists in ESRD, and they are in the Speaker's gallery. I'll ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my second introduction today is from the town of Fox Creek. I have the mayor and their council here. I'd like them to

stand as I call their names. Mayor Jim Ahn, Robin Gervais, Jim Hailes, Chris Stadnyk, and Roy Dell. They're in the members' gallery, and if we could give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I have some very special guests in your gallery. The last time I introduced them to this Assembly, two were toddlers, one was an infant, and another was inside his mommy's tummy, and, in defiance of the laws of aging, one is somehow even more beautiful today than she was seven years ago. I'd ask if they would stand so I can introduce them. My oldest son, Derek, is 10. Then there's Bryce and Spencer, both eight. Joshua is almost six years old. And, of course, there's my angel wife of almost 14 years, Anita. Also, one of my greatest heroes, my father, Robert Anderson Sr., is here.

As all hon. members know, our families sacrifice so much for us to be able to do what we do. For me, most Sunday nights these last seven years ended with goodbyes, hugs, a few tears, and promises of coming home to spend a few hours with them between events. It meant Anita having to look after four little boys possessed with the same very agreeable DNA that I possess. Well, no more. Thanks for everything, Mom and Dad. I love you, Anita, and, boys, I'm coming home for good, and we're going to savour the rest of our lives together.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for that.

Let us move on to Calgary-Fort, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With great pleasure I rise to introduce to you and through you to all our members my guests seated in your gallery, Mr. Hung Tran and Mrs. Lan Tran from Winnipeg. They plan to move to our great province of Alberta. They are parents of my daughter-in-law Mimi Tran, who was here campaigning for the ban on youth tanning, so thank you, Minister of Health.

Also, another guest is the first piece of conceptual art from my wife and me when we work together. William Cao is the chief legal counsel of a national company in Calgary.

Another very special guest, who gave me the permanent highest promotion to the rank of grandpa, our grandson Dylan Cao is here on his sabbatical leave of two weeks from kindergarten at the University of Calgary.

I call on my guests to stand up and receive the warmest welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Calgary-Cross.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two very special introductions today sitting in the Speaker's gallery. The first is Carmen Remenda, who was the executive assistant to not only myself but Dr. Taft and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. It's her 10-year anniversary on April 18 of serving the Liberal leaders in the Legislature. Carmen, I thank you for your service to democracy and to myself and to all the leaders. I'd ask Carmen to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, a very special guest. It's my mother. Her name is Santosh Sherman. My mother wanted to come here, on what may be the last time I have a chance to address the Assembly, to personally thank you for visiting our home at the time when my father was passing, almost four years ago today. My mother was a young, eight-year-old girl when the partition of India happened, and

her grandfather was the best friend of Lord Mountbatten when they negotiated the partition.

She came as a young immigrant woman to this country in 1972 and had a baby here and raised four boys. She was a seamstress. As you all know, she sewed the uniforms for the Lakers and the Edmonton Oilers when they won all their cups in the early '80s. Also, Mr. Speaker, anything I am as a man, as an individual is because of my mother, who is a very strong woman and individual, who has raised me and always taught me to be hopeful and positive and optimistic. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I believe you have another introduction. Please proceed.

**Dr. Sherman:** Just departing comments. I came here as a young child with a dream to come to this country. I never thought I would live the life that I've had: on one hand, being a member of government, an independent member, and I've had the opportunity to serve as leader through now the fourth Premier. It's been a true pleasure for me to work with each and every one of you elected members on all sides and serve under you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much. Thank you to Alberta, and thank you to everybody who supported me. God bless you all. [Standing ovation]

1:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, followed by Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly my husband, Lanny Fritz, who is seated up in your gallery. Lanny and I, as you know, first dated when we were 15 and 16, and we're very proud of our two beautiful children, Holly and Matthew. My husband has had an exemplary career in law enforcement. He retired from the Calgary Police Service after 28 years of outstanding service, and he just recently retired from the University of Calgary as the director of campus security after 17 amazing years. Honey, you've been holding my hand for 50 years now, and you've never let go. I love you, and I'm so glad you're here today. Please stand.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week our Premier introduced the members of the Métis Women's Economic Security Council to this House. Today on behalf of his leadership it is truly my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislative Assembly the members of the First Nations Women's Economic Security Council. These councils were the brainchild of the Member for Calgary-Varsity and were established by then Minister of Aboriginal Relations, now Finance minister. Both councils have done an exemplary job, and as a result our government is accepting the recommendations of these two councils, which are aimed at improving social and economic outcomes for aboriginal women in Alberta.

These strong women of the First Nations Women's Economic Security Council are with us today, and I ask that they stand as I call their names: Co-chair Grace Auger, Co-chair Koren Lightning-Earle, Dr. Andrea Kennedy, Angela Grier, Anna Wowchuck, Barb Wendt, Brenda Joly, Cindy Provost, Darlene Plamondon, Janice Tanton, Karri-Lynn Paul, Kathleen Laboucan, Kim Shade, Dr. Lana Potts, Leah Bear Chief, Marggo Pariseau, Nicole Robertson, Peggy Richardson, Rita Marten, Tanya Schur, Theresa Bear Chief. Mr.

Speaker, they are standing in the members' gallery, and I ask that this House give them a very, very warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, followed by the Minister of Human Services.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. An emotional day as we say goodbye to people. It's my privilege to introduce through you and to you two very special people in my life. The first one is a young man by the name of Evan Menzies, who is our director of communications. He's probably one of the best directors of communications I've ever had the privilege of working with, and it's been an honour and a privilege to be able to work with him.

The second one is Jennifer Wainwright, who works in my Calgary office, who is our guru on Health and has made me successful on the Health file and being able to hold the government accountable.

I want to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives of some of the 40 students who were awarded the Persons Case scholarship this year. They'll be joining us in the House at 2. This scholarship was created to honour the Alberta women who fought and won the right for women to be deemed persons under Canadian law in 1929. The Persons Case scholarships are awarded to students whose studies will contribute to the advancement of women and to those who are studying in nontraditional fields.

We are honoured to have some of them with us today. Please join me in welcoming, first, Ruby Littlechild, MBA in community economic development, former leg. assistant for the Member for Lesser Slave Lake; Quinn Boser, B.Sc. in mechanical engineering and biomed co-op; Rebecca Taylor, MA in sociology; Darcie Kutryk, diploma in architectural technology; Hailey Ross, social work diploma; Salma Elmallah, B.Sc. in electrical engineering; Emily Dutton, BA in women's and gender studies; Leandra Shade, B.Sc. in electrical engineering; and, of course, Wendy Joy, the manager with the women's equality and advancement unit and co-chair of the Persons Case scholarship. Congratulations. Please join me in welcoming them.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by the Minister of Finance.

**Ms L. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a few special guests. This week is school break in Calgary, and my guests had a visit to the Legislature on their must-do list. Seated in the members' gallery, from Calgary, are Jeff Gaulin and his two children, Jonah Gaulin, who is a grade 7 student at John Ware junior high school, and Audrey Gaulin, who is a grade 5 student at Nellie McClung elementary school. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, followed by the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Ed.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you my press secretary, Kevin Zahara. Kevin has had a diverse career, being elected to town council in Athabasca when he was 19 years old and elected twice in Edson. He was also one of the youngest radio DJs in the country and continued his career in radio after serving on council. He is dedicated to his community; he is an avid volunteer. I had the pleasure of officiating at his wedding last July. Kevin has spent many hours working on Budget 2015 with the rest of my staff, and I want to thank him for his dedication. I want to thank his wife and his daughter for allowing him to work late into the night. I'd ask Kevin to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education, followed by the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all of my colleagues four members of the Alberta Economic Development Authority Board, whose annual activity report I will be tabling today. This board consists of senior-level executives who are leaders in their communities and whose depths of knowledge and expertise will continue to serve our province well. I'd ask that they rise as I call out their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Mr. Jim Carter, former president of Syncrude Canada and now serving on several boards and on the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Alberta Public Service; Mr. Andy Calitz, CEO of LNG Canada, a Shell-PetroChina-KOGAS-Mitsubishi joint venture, prior to which he was responsible for new business developments and strategic investments; Mr. Yasmin Jivraj, president and co-owner of Acrodex, a leading provider of strategic IT services for numerous Canadian businesses; and Marc de La Bruyère, principal and chairman of Maclab Enterprises. He has served as a board member of several educational, community, and nonprofit organizations and also on the Premier's advisory council on the public service. With them is Robert Fernandez, executive director of the Alberta Economic Development Authority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we could all give them a warm round of applause.

I do have one additional introduction.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed with your second introduction.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the member from the constituency of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo it's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Natasha and Greg Dunbar and their daughter Bailey. We are very privileged to have this family here today as they are joining us for a very important reason. Last year 13-year-old Morgan Dunbar, Natasha and Greg's daughter and Bailey's twin sister, took her own life after being the victim of bullying. The Dunbars are resilient and have been strong in their healing process. They have created a new foundation called Morgan's Mission to raise awareness about cyberbullying. They are here today to meet with government officials to discuss cyberbullying, mental health, and suicide prevention support. I would ask Natasha, Greg, and Bailey to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, we have two more introductions. Let's see if we can get them both in, starting with the Minister of Energy, followed by Calgary-East.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through to all hon. members of the Assembly

Mr. Scott Wenger, who has joined us in the gallery. He's a great representative of his company, Suncor, and a great ambassador for the oil and gas industry in Alberta. I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a dear friend of mine, Mr. Arman Chak. Arman is an Edmonton lawyer, a bencher of the Law Society, an active member of the community, a dedicated volunteer, and much, much more. Arman is seated in the public gallery. I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

We have about 15 seconds left. Is there anyone else with an introduction quickly? I see none.

Hon. members, before we start Oral Question Period, could I just remind you of the memo I sent out yesterday regarding photos that will be taken in Chamber tomorrow. Please review that because there are some photos during the procession entrance, another one right after the prayer, and then during the budget speech.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Let us begin. Thirty-five seconds for each question, 35 seconds for each response.

Let us be led off by the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Health Care Funding

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night Albertans saw two campaign-style TV ads. One was the typical liberal tax and spend message, and the other came from the leader of the third party. The Premier believes taxes are the answer. He calls it a health levy, but it has nothing to do with health care. It's a Kananaskis golf course tax, a pay raise for upper management tax, a billion-dollar corporate welfare tax, a fine china for the Premier's office tax. It's a PC waste and mismanagement tax. Why won't the Premier just call it what it is?

**Mr. Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, it's hard to know what to make of that. This is a difficult time for our province. We all know this. It is, however, also a hopeful time for our province as we stick together as Albertans. One cannot help but be moved to listen to the Member for Calgary-Fort speak about his responsibilities as a grandfather or the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark speak about his responsibilities as a son or the Member for Calgary-Cross speak about her responsibilities as a spouse. It's time for all Albertans to pull together.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've heard that Redford hope message before.

The Premier says that Albertans will have to start paying for health care. Who does he think was paying for it all along? We already spend as much on health care as B.C., who has more people and gets better results, but instead of reining in PC waste and excess, this Premier believes more taxes are the answer. It's not, Premier. The answer is acknowledging the sins of this government and governments past and reining in the spending that created the most bloated government in Canada. Mr. Premier, why won't you do that instead of raising taxes on hard-working Albertans?

**Mr. Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, this government will deal with the challenges that we face on behalf of Albertans. We will deal with the recognition that people in this province are losing their jobs. There is not a person in this Chamber that is not touched by someone in this province who has lost a job at this point. We're cognizant of that. We have a fine health care system. It needs to be improved, and we need to work on eliminating waste. We have excellent front-line workers. We also have an exceptional minister that is hands on, that is doing a phenomenal job in this department.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** No, Premier, it's not Albertans' fault; it's your fault for spending like drunken sailors.

The Premier talks about a 10-year plan, but it may as well be a hundred-year plan. We've seen three-year fiscal plans and five-year health plans before, and because they never acknowledge that government waste is the problem, they never work. Now new taxes will enable more of what we've seen before: more spending on golf courses, sky palaces, management, and perks for your friends. It's a PC waste and mismanagement tax. Why won't the Premier admit that this government's spending is the problem and save Albertans from the biggest tax hike ever?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are too many inconsistencies and incorrect statements in that statement to respond to all of them, but let me just be clear. This government will deal in a responsible way with the finances of this province. We will protect the interests of Albertans and their children and their grandchildren, and we will emerge from this stronger than we are today with or without the help of the opposition.

**The Speaker:** Second main set of questions. The hon. opposition leader.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear. The tax increase will damage economic growth. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that the idea of this new tax is not something businesses would look forward to, saying that, and I'll quote, the government should be able to recognize that taking money out of the economy for health care premiums is especially going to make tough economic times even more tough. Now is not the time to introduce new taxes on Albertans. Premier, will you back down from the most dangerous tax when Albertans are hurting the most?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that we are not going to entertain a health care premium that was done in the past. That was a regressive tax, and it was hard on low-income wage earners. I'd just ask the member across to stay tuned for the budget tomorrow.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Minister, it's a tax.

Raising taxes when times are tough shows a serious lack of imagination for economic and fiscal policies. It's unoriginal and short sighted and will hurt our ability to grow the economy. What takes real courage is looking in the mirror and staring back at the fine china, the MLA palaces, the billions in perks and pay for managers, and getting your house in order. Premier, please. Will you stop this tax and finally get serious about cutting the layers of PC fat across government while protecting front-line services?

**Mr. Campbell:** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that we are looking after front-line services. We've made it very clear to Albertans in our talks across the province that we'll look after our core services in health care, in education, our most vulnerable, and our seniors. We will do what we have to do to streamline our

programming and reduce our spending in a very pragmatic and practical manner so that we do not put this province into recession and we do not kill jobs for Albertans.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Minister, you're killing jobs for Albertans because you couldn't keep your fiscal house in order.

Here are the facts, Premier. While Albertans are hurting, PC politicians and managers have never had it so good. While you drain billions on golf courses, fine china, new MLA offices, and corporate payouts, you are asking Albertans to pay more. This tax will mean less for the economy and more money for misguided PC priorities. The idea that you can tax your way back to prosperity is not how we built this great province. Premier, please. On behalf of Albertans will you step back from this awful, misguided policy before it's too late?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's awful rich coming from the Leader of the Opposition, her comments about fine china and spending. I would suggest that the government has been very clear in talking to Albertans that we're going to take a three-lever approach with the situation in phases. We are going to get our budget in balance moving forward, and we're going to do it in a very constructive and a very pragmatic manner to make sure that we don't put any undue hardship on our working poor or our most vulnerable. We will make sure that we have a budget that is in the best interests of Albertans moving forward over the next 10 years so that we are in the best position of any province in the next decade.

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

### Provincial Fiscal Position

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At a time in our province's history when we most need strong, clear, courageous leadership, we now see where the Premier stands. First he blamed the fiscal crisis on oil prices, then he blamed Albertans, and now he's trying to throw past Premiers under the bus. Everyone is responsible except him. Given that you were elected to office for years before becoming Premier, including serving as federal Minister of Industry, why didn't you sound any alarms that Alberta should get off the resource revenue roller coaster? Why were you hiding?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reassure the hon. member that what he will see tomorrow is, to quote himself, "strong, clear, courageous leadership" from the government, and I hope that he supports us.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, what we saw last evening was Albertans witnessing a remarkable example of armchair quarterbacking. He blamed Premier after Premier for putting Alberta in this fiscal PC mess, yet at no time in the decades that this Premier was a member of the PC Party did he speak up to the leadership of this party. To the Premier: whose interests were you protecting by saying nothing? Whose interests?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I travelled the province with the Premier during the leadership review in the summer. I've been by his side since he became leader in September. I can tell you that there's nobody in this House that has more integrity or has a better vision for the province of Alberta, and our 10-year fiscal plan will show that moving forward.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.



**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The coming election has nothing to do with Martha and Henry's families and has everything to do with this Premier's self-interest. He is calling an early election to reassert his grasp on power and hide the deep cuts he has planned for after the election. Will the Premier admit that you're hiding again from Albertans and not revealing the difficult fiscal decisions you're going to make after the election?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest the members stay tuned for the budget tomorrow. You'll see a very detailed five-year plan and a 10-year vision for the province. He will see that this Premier will make the tough decisions to make sure that Alberta is in the best fiscal position it can be for the next decade moving forward.

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

2:00

### Health Care Funding (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier admitted that his PC government is planning to reintroduce Alberta's health care premium. This waiting room tax is a tax on families while profitable corporations get off scot-free. Albertans know very well that there's a crisis in our hospitals, and they also know that freezing the health care budget will make that crisis worse. To the Premier: why are you asking Albertans to pay more so that they get less, health care in particular?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to correct the hon. member, I did not say last night that we would reintroduce the former health care premium. That is not the suggestion that was made. All Albertans expect and deserve to have excellent health care. We deserve to have fine health care workers, front-line workers. That's what this government is focused on. We will eliminate waste and inefficiency in the system, but we intend to preserve the quality of front-line health care services for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the government's own budget survey a mere 28 per cent of Albertans said that they wanted a waiting room tax while a clear majority supported rolling back the reckless PC corporate tax cuts. The Premier and his PC government continue to ignore the voices of ordinary Albertans. Again to the Premier: if you're not going to listen to a single thing they say, why did you waste the time of more than 40,000 Albertans with your budget survey?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have consulted with Albertans; we've listened to Albertans. There's, again, not a single member in this House who is not affected by the fact that there are Albertans in this province losing jobs. We worry about that. We worry about it for young people; we worry about it for young people who are graduating from universities and colleges. We will not introduce a job-killing tax, where every single point results in the loss of 8,900 jobs in this province. That might be the policy of the NDP; it's not the policy of this party.

**Ms Notley:** Instead you're introducing a whole job-killing plan.

Mr. Speaker, pay more; get less: this Alberta looks more and more like a big bank every day. Pay more with the PC's waiting room tax; get less with a frozen provincial budget that won't account for 80,000 new Albertans, inflation, or the sorry state of our health care system right now. To the Premier. Your government

is ignoring what Albertans want, you've allowed the crisis in Alberta's hospitals to get worse, and now you're asking them to accept fewer services and pay more for them. Why should Albertans accept this?

**Mr. Campbell:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I get a little tired of listening to the opposition fearmonger about the crisis in the health care system. I spent six months in the health care system. I'm here today because of it. I spent more time in hospitals, labs, and clinics than any member in this House has. We have excellent front-line workers, we have excellent doctors, we have excellent specialists. We should be proud of our health care system and proud of this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Electricity Regulation

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** You have the floor.

**Mr. Anglin:** It takes more than two years to connect the proposed project to Alberta's electricity system. Some projects take up to as much as three years. Industry groups, consumer groups, and all stakeholders agree that streamlining the regulatory process could easily save consumers \$40 million annually. Given that we could save consumers money, why does this government refuse to correct the regulatory process governing our electricity system?

**Mr. Oberle:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have an efficient regulatory system. This member spent the first part of his career here arguing that we didn't have any regulation, and now he's arguing we should have less regulation. It's a little confusing sometimes. I'm sure we all share the same sentiment.

**Mr. Anglin:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, during that last response.

Let us hear your first supplemental.

**Mr. Anglin:** Did you get my point of order on that? Thank you very much. I want to argue that one.

The AESO's, Alberta Electric System Operator's, role and responsibility have not changed in the 15 years since deregulation, yet its annual regulatory budget and cost to consumers has skyrocketed. Why is the AESO's annual budget ballooning out of control?

**Mr. Oberle:** The AESO's budget is not ballooning out of control, Mr. Speaker. They're dealing with a significant number of projects as we build out and add to our generation capacity and transmission capacity in this province, and they've had to respond to that.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental, hon. member.

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly 15 years ago this government began its implementation of deregulation. Since that time the cost of regulation has risen from \$13 million a year to \$150 million a year. To the minister: why have these regulatory costs of a deregulated market ballooned over 1,100 per cent?

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, in that same time period Alberta constructed a power system and a grid the size of Saskatchewan for not one penny of public debt. The correct comparator here, the one

that Albertans should be interested in, is that our price of power is the lowest it's been since we deregulated.

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

### Health Care Funding (continued)

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 this same government eliminated health care premiums. Now we hear that they'll be breaking that promise tomorrow. Flip-flops are now so common in this government that they're hardly news. Will the Premier talk about these health fees, and will it be another flat tax that will hurt working Albertans and charge a single mother making minimum wage the same as a bank vice-president?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member knows better. Stay tuned to the budget tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This Premier is once again ruling by opinion polls and not doing what is best for the province, ignoring the elephant in the room, the unsustainable revenue structure, and distracting Albertans with this on-again, off-again health premium. Why are you waiting till after the election to tell Albertans the real truth about how deep the cuts will be?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, we have a budget scheduled for tomorrow. I think the address is at 3 o'clock. The member should stay tuned, and he'll get the answers he's looking for.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, given that the health levies and premiums have been ruled out not only by this government but seven other governments in Canada, when will the government stop misleading Albertans and bring in a fair tax structure?

**Mr. Campbell:** Same answer as before, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Let's move on to the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Highway 732

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the summer of 2014 the town of Fairview, in my constituency, completed a rehabilitation project on Highway 732, that goes within the town limits. This project included new water and sewer lines to replace failing infrastructure. Highway 732 bears heavy traffic. The overlay on this dug-up highway was replaced with uncrowned asphalt patches at the completion of the project and is now failing, leaving the road in very poor condition. To the Minister of Transportation: with the work completed on Highway 732, will the department address the needed paving issues on this section of the highway, as they indicated they would?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to this hon. member for the question. He's a great advocate for his constituents, and his strong voice will be missed in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my department is aware of the issue in the town of Fairview, and my department has been working closely with the town to evaluate this stretch of road. We are in the process of hiring a design consultant right now, and there are plans to hire an engineer this summer to re-evaluate the conditions of highway 732, or 113th Street, after this year's spring thaw.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental, hon. member.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when the paving is done on this section, will the department install wheelchair ramps along this section of highway, particularly at the intersections where the school crossings exist?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, wheelchair accessibility is something this government and my department take very seriously. It's critical that Albertans with disabilities have safe access to sidewalks, especially at school crossings. I'm pleased to inform this member and his constituents that the design for this project will include wheelchair access.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good news.  
Again to the same minister: will the department also be performing repairs during this project to replace the curbs and gutters that have basically disappeared along highway 732?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, any paving project along 113th Street in Fairview will include the necessary curb and gutter work. My department will continue to work closely with the town to determine the extent of the work needed, and the project will proceed as provincial budgets allow.

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

### 2:10 Government Spending at Fiscal Year-end

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to believe that this Premier is adamant about raising taxes while members of his cabinet blew through \$104 million in March madness spending. Millions for fine china, napkins, golf shirts, glassware, linen, and cutlery: these are PC priorities. The Infrastructure minister couldn't explain this spike in spending. Minister, if you don't know where or why or how this money was pushed out the door, will you do the right thing and call on the Auditor General to fix this mess?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let us be clear that this member is speaking about last year. We have been very clear that our focus is to ensure that we are minimizing our spending, focusing on the economy, protecting the savings of Albertans, protecting the jobs of Albertans. That's our focus.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the eve of one of the largest tax increases in history Albertans expect some accountability for this type of excessive waste. If the Premier's office thinks new fine china, glassware, and cutlery are a necessity when times are tough, Albertans deserve an explanation. Wildrose thinks that \$104 million in extra spending is a waste. Will your government commit

to putting a fresh set of eyes on this spending to protect Albertans from dangerous tax hikes?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and his party should know that a year makes a lot of difference, and he shouldn't really be confusing Albertans by comparing last year's spending to what's taking place on my watch as Premier.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Mr. Speaker, if the government doesn't take \$100 million in spending every March seriously, how can Albertans expect and know that they need to pay more taxes? I'll give the minister one last chance. Will he call in the Auditor General to inspect this spending, or will the Wildrose be forced to require an investigation because you won't do your job?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite continue to live in a fantasy world, where they like to impose their ideas of reality upon the rest of us. The rest of us know better. The fact remains that there's no fine bone china. There are catering services, that are required once in a while at McDougall Centre for up to 200 people, and catering-style cups and plates were ordered. Stainless steel knives and forks were ordered, nothing fancy, nothing fine bone. I would suggest that the members opposite please get the facts right.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Let's move on to Calgary-South East, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

### Cancer Treatment

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak about a constituent that I've come to know through my constituency office and the events that I've held in my community. She's a devoted wife, a loving mother, and she has stage 4 cancer, which has spread to her bones and liver. Many Albertans fight with all their will to combat this terrible disease. Her treatment regimen consists of drugs which are not available in Canada yet like Perjeta. If she wishes to receive these drugs, she must travel out of country, which is a physical and emotional strain on her and her loved ones. To the Minister of Health: she's not covered through the health care system, particularly for the drug Perjeta, again adding further costs to her and her family. Mr. Minister, how often do we review treatment plans and best practices to our approach to cancer so that we can provide more in-province . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Let's hear from the minister now.

**Mr. Mandel:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, first of all, our hearts and prayers go out to the family. I can't speak to individual cases, but we have a strong evidence-based decision-making process for determining which drugs can be used and which can't. Drugs new to the market are covered by Health Canada and approved by Health Canada. Our benefit list is updated monthly when required. Cancer drugs included on the list are provided at no cost to Albertans. You know, Albertans can be assured that we are employing the best practices when it comes to cancer care. I also want to inform this hon. member that the new uses for Perjeta are under review at the national level by the pan-Canadian oncology drug review.

**Mr. Fraser:** To the same minister. As you mentioned, the situation is heartbreaking, and our hearts do go out to that family. We also

know that there are similar stories throughout the province like my own: the loss of my mother, my mother-in-law, my grandmother, and the cancer that's in my father now. Can you tell me, Mr. Minister, that we have a robust and comprehensive plan to beat this disease once and for all?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mandel:** Yes. I thank the hon. member for the question. I don't think there are many families in this province who have not been touched by cancer. We have Changing Our Future: Alberta's Cancer Plan to 2030, which is the government's plan to reduce the risk of cancer, increase cancer cure rates, and reduce the stress for cancer patients. We'll accomplish these goals by working with partners on various initiatives, including research, screening programs, and providing emotional support to cancer patients. Alberta Health Services' latest report on cancer rates shows that our screening and prevention efforts are having a positive impact.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, can you just tell Albertans how through the Alberta government they can navigate this terrible disease, whether it's through websites or information?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, we have an excellent service, provided by patient navigators, that helps Albertans with cancer find the resources they need. Patient navigators are at the cancer centres across the province to help cancer patients make informed decisions and understand and prepare for the treatments. Patient navigators also improve co-ordination of care by working with other health care providers and helping patients access financial resources and community supports. We do all we can.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Carbon Emission Reduction

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Incentives are designed to change behaviour, and putting a price on carbon to change behaviour has been tried and triumphed elsewhere. This government can bury its head in the sand, but failing to do something other than manipulate figures has had and will have serious consequences for Alberta's environment and its main industry. B.C. has an effective carbon tax, the EU, Norway, so to the Premier: why don't we? Why don't we have an effective carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta was the first jurisdiction in North America to actually put a price on carbon. We have \$15 per tonne with a 12 per cent intensity. We also are committed to slowing our emissions, and we're doing a great deal in this province. We were the first jurisdiction to do that, setting realistic targets, and we're meeting those targets.

**Ms Blakeman:** Don't talk about that \$15 levy again. It's just embarrassing.

To the same minister: given that Keystone has taught us that pipelines just will not get built until the environmental protections are embraced as the number one factor – and I know that this government desperately wants pipelines – what will the government

do to repair and advance Alberta's environmental efforts and position Alberta as a leader, not some two-year-old kid lagging far behind?

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad that the member brought up our carbon fund. She may find it embarrassing, but both Saskatchewan and the province of British Columbia are duplicating ours, B.C. under LNG and Saskatchewan modelling ours. We have a great system here in Alberta, that keeps the economy strong while taking care of the environment.

**Ms Blakeman:** Everyone is paying the carbon tax in B.C., not just our oil and gas companies.

To the Premier. This Premier has a 20-year history with pipelines, yet none of them got built. Is he ready to do something now? Are you ready to shut down coal-fired generation, put a real price on carbon, target 30 per cent more on non oil and gas energy, try feed-in tariffs for solar and wind? Are you ready to try anything at all? You might be more successful.

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does an injustice to Albertans because she denigrates the system that we have in this province, that people come from all over the world to admire and to follow in terms of their own carbon policies. Frankly, last week the minister beside me announced that Alberta would be a partner of choice with the World Bank, where we lead the world in terms of reducing emissions and venting and flaring of methane. That's the kind of thing that we're achieving as Albertans. The hon. member should take pride in it and celebrate it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

#### Foreign Qualification Recognition

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I often hear stories from my constituents who are underemployed and overqualified for their jobs. They have an education and a background in areas like dentistry and junior accounting from their country of origin, but when they come here to make a life for themselves in Canada, their qualifications are not recognized, and they find themselves serving tables and driving cabs. My question to the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: with so many Canadians who have come here from other countries so overqualified for their jobs, what is the minister doing so this . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

We'll have to hear from the hon. minister now.

2:20

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, we try to help Albertans and Canadians to find work first, but when people come here with qualifications from other places in the world, the very best thing we can do for Alberta, which is also the best thing we can do for them, is to get their qualifications recognized so they can practise in the field of endeavour where they've been trained. There's a lot of work to be done. We work with professional regulatory organizations to co-ordinate that. There's a lot of work to be done, and it goes on. The hon. member is right to point out that this is an issue.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the foreign qualification recognition plan was launched more than six years ago, why have we not seen progress in recognizing those individuals?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I'm going to take a little issue with my colleague on this one. We actually have made progress. I can tell the hon. member and you, Mr. Speaker, that since 2009 we have invested nearly \$4 million in grants through our foreign qualification recognition innovation fund to support 50 projects to improve and streamline the assessment of foreign qualifications. Examples are the College of Dietitians, who work with the University of Alberta on four web-based bridging programs so that somebody doesn't have to redo their whole training but can, rather, just fill in the blanks of where they need upgrading; also, the physiotherapists and many other professional regulatory organizations.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Final supplemental.

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: given that despite this progress the number of professions included in this plan is very low, why is this program not accessible to more professions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is right. We need to include more professions, and I'm happy to report that it is being done. In the pan-Canadian framework that I mentioned, there are 10 new targeted occupations identified, including midwives, psychologists, carpenters, welders, and electricians. Our government continues to work with the professional regulatory organizations to bridge those gaps, to make sure that in those places where people can't get recognized, we can help them do that, and the work continues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-South West.

#### Corporate Taxes

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In this government's own budget survey 69 per cent of Albertans supported large, profitable corporations paying their fair share. The PC government, led by a former vice-president of a big bank, is set to ignore them. It's clear that this PC government cares more about corporate bottom lines than about the people of Alberta. To the Minister of Finance: why don't you make sure that everyone is paying their fair share before hitting Alberta families with cuts to vital programs and health care charges?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that everybody does pay their fair share in Alberta. This government is about creating jobs. It's about creating investment in the province. We are going to make sure that we have the lowest tax regime in Canada so that people continue to come here and invest, corporations both large and small, and we will continue to do this to make sure that this province is successful moving into the future.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, if you laid all the economists in the world end to end, you still wouldn't reach a consensus, and they are depending entirely on one economist for their proof. Given that this government has already cut corporate taxes by over one-third, the lowest in the country, can the minister tell us why, if lower corporate taxes create jobs, these companies have laid off tens of thousands of hard-working Albertans in the last several months, including 14,000 in February alone?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just made the argument why we won't raise corporate taxes, because they are laying off thousands of workers in the province. We know that we want to continue to create jobs, so we're not going to raise corporate taxes. It's that simple.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, it's overly simple in this minister's mind, Mr. Speaker.

Given that in 2012 the state of Wisconsin elected a Republican governor, who laid off thousands of staff, slashed the public service, and cut taxes on rich corporations, and given that in the same year Minnesotans elected a Democrat government that did the opposite and given that today Minnesota far outstrips Wisconsin in economic growth and job creation, can the minister explain how Jack Mintz's far-fetched economic theories square with the practical realities of these two states?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to compare the states to a province is like comparing apples and oranges. For example, one thing: we have publicly funded health care that we will not apologize for; the states don't. We've talked to more than just Jack Mintz. We talked to economists from the major leading banks both in Canada and the United States, and they have all said to us to take a very prudent approach moving forward with the budget. We're going to do so.

#### Postsecondary Tuition Fees

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Mr. Speaker, I meet with many of our partners in the postsecondary system. Just yesterday I was at my alma mater, the U of A campus, and I can tell you that like many others, they are nervously awaiting tomorrow's provincial budget. Advanced education is a necessity in navigating today's job market, but it isn't cheap. Students that I've spoken to are concerned that tomorrow's budget will lift Alberta's tuition cap, and they're also concerned that their voices may not be heard in discussions about Campus Alberta moving forward. To the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education. I want to clarify: have you heard the students' concerns about removing a tuition cap, and will you commit to involving students in the postbudget discussions?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Ed.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have heard the students' concerns. I met with students last week, and I heard their concerns about removing the tuition cap. I can tell you definitively that there are no imminent changes to the tuition cap. Our postsecondary budget consultation with Campus Alberta partners will focus on ways to make the system sustainable, accessible, and focused on excellence. Campus Alberta's student leaders will play a large role in that consultation. It's crucial that they have a big voice at the table, and they will.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's mandate letter to the minister specifically directs this minister to create and implement a plan for long-term, stable, and predictable funding. Can the minister please tell me when this plan will be complete?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said in last night's address, Budget 2015 will take immediate action to deal with our fiscal challenges in a balanced way, protecting core services and maintaining Alberta's tax advantages. The budget will

also look to the future and bring forward a 10-year plan for this province. Campus Alberta is a big part of our future, and we know that institutions are better able to deliver when they have long-term, stable, and predictable funding. This will be a big part of the conversation that government will have going forward and part of our postbudget discussions with Campus Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. There have been lots of talks with the Campus Alberta system in the past, but can you clarify, Minister: is this just another exercise, and what can you tell students about why this time is different?

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you again for the question. We don't have the luxury of just talking for the sake of an exercise, Mr. Speaker. We need to get results. The Premier and Alberta's government are focused on a system that delivers excellence. This consultation process with our partners will develop a five-year plan for Campus Alberta. The result of this plan will be a system that is firing on all cylinders, a system that is sustainable, accessible, and focused on excellence. All ideas will be on the table, including funding models, revenue generation for institutions, improvements to student aid, and ensuring that apprenticeship technical training is better aligned with labour demands.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, you were almost superseded by your leader, but I'll recognize you at this time.

#### Education Funding

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, last night the Premier told us that he intends to cut the Education budget further by holding the line on spending. Eighty thousand people are expected to move to Alberta this year alone, and while it's true that they don't bring schools with them, they don't bring teachers or support staff either. To the Minister of Education: will the minister explain how he can hold the line on spending and still expect to provide the teachers and support staff that our children need to be successful?

**Mr. Dirks:** I'm very pleased the member opposite has asked this question. I value every opportunity to speak about our stellar education system, one of the best in the world, Mr. Speaker. The reason why it's one of the best in the world is that we invest about \$38 million per day right now, and we'll just have to wait for the budget tomorrow to see what our investment will be going forward. One of the reasons why we have such an outstanding education system is because of the very high-quality teachers in our system. We can be proud of every one of them.

**Mr. Bilous:** CBE shows that per-student funding has been declining for years. Given that classrooms are already bursting at the seams and given that kids are not getting the one-to-one support they need due to a shortage of staff, to the same minister: even if this government finally makes good on its new-school promises, how will they staff these schools with a hold-the-line budget?

2:30

**Mr. Dirks:** Goodness me, Mr. Speaker. He talks about us, that even if we made good on our promises. Has he not been listening to how many new schools we have been opening in past months, how much great progress we are making on building the new schools, the 232 new school projects, which are a priority for this government and for all Albertans? He ought to be saying in this Assembly that this

government is doing amazing things when it comes to funding education. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, you have the floor.

**Mr. Bilous:** I guess the promise was to hammer signs in the ground.

Mr. Speaker, given that kids with special learning needs do not have the help they need because there simply aren't enough assistants or support staff and given that class sizes are continuing to balloon, to the same minister: how will this PC government possibly support the kids of 80,000 new Albertans when they can't even support our existing students?

**Mr. Dirks:** Mr. Speaker, one of the strengths of Alberta is our education system. That's one of the reasons why people move to this province. They want to be part of experiencing for their children a wonderful, world-class education system. We do value every student, and we particularly value those who have special needs. We provide school boards with \$38 million a day. We trust them to make wise judgments about how they're going to allocate those dollars so that all of our special-needs children are going to be appropriately educated.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

#### Ambulance Service Availability

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ambulances are an essential part of our medical system. When I or my constituents are in an emergency situation, we rely on an ambulance to get us to a hospital as quickly as possible. I am concerned about the so-called code reds. How can we accept a situation in a province such as Alberta where there are no ambulances available? My first question is to the Minister of Health. How is this an acceptable result of the most expensive health system in Canada?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. A code red means that at a point in time – it might be for two minutes or two seconds – an ambulance isn't available. This year we've had some difficult times, and I appreciate that, but I want to be very clear that it does not directly endanger a patient, and it does not mean any ambulance is not going to be delivered to a site. Be very clear about that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you. To the Minister of Health: given that any incidence of a code red is cause for concern, is this exceptionally high incidence recently a sign that Alberta Health Services is failing?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services is doing all they can in very difficult times. This government has in the last little while increased the number of opportunities in long-term care beds, continuing care, and supportive living, and as a result of that we've been able to move people out of the system, into these facilities, to open up opportunities within our acute care beds. It's difficult times. We're working hard to ensure the system operates well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you. To the same minister: it's a broken emergency service, Minister. What are you doing to fix it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mandel:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, code red is a dangerous issue, but it is very short term, as I indicated earlier. It's two minutes or two seconds. The fact of the matter is that we're making strides though creating more opportunities for paramedics to do more things at the site. They don't have to move people to the hospitals, which will free up our ambulances. We've also recently announced our rural health care plan, which is going to direct that all of our rural ambulances will not be able to stay at hospitals but must return to their home site on an immediate basis. We're doing, I think, an exceptional job in ensuring that all of our people are taken care of.

#### Education Concerns

**Mr. Hehr:** Five years ago this government let go school board trustees in the Northland school division because of poor student attendance and a lack of progress being made in educating our kids. Essentially, this government took responsibility to fix what was clearly broken. Fast forward five years. Unbelievably, this situation has gotten worse. The Auditor General reported that as many as one-third of our students in this district are chronically absent. To the minister: how come your ministry has made no progress in educating our kids in the Northland school division?

**Mr. Dirks:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when I became minister or very shortly thereafter under this government's new management, I became aware of the situation in Northland. Of course, we would want all of our students to be attending school regularly. It's a matter of deep concern to me that a report has come forward indicating that there is a significant number of children who are not regularly in attendance at school. I've met with the Auditor. We've had a good discussion on this matter, and we have every intention of working with the official trustee to ensure that we are putting a good plan in place to ameliorate this attendance problem.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the report notwithstanding, this government knew five years ago that there was a problem. That's why they got rid of the school board. Nevertheless, what has your department done? We can see absolutely no tangible evidence of your moving forward on this file. Have you inquired what the heck your department is doing to fix this education system?

**Mr. Dirks:** Mr. Speaker, one of the solutions to the Northland situation is to have an elected board, which will provide solid governance in that division. That's very important. As a new Minister of Education that is the direction in which I am moving, and I certainly welcome all members to support us in that regard.

**Mr. Hehr:** Public education has not been a priority since I arrived at this Legislature. We have no full-day kindergarten yet, class sizes have skyrocketed, and we have 1,500 fewer teachers in our classrooms as a result of not keeping funding levels where they were. Schools have been promised and not been built. Can the minister admit that there have been victims as a result of us not fixing our fiscal structure, and they have been our school-aged children?

**Mr. Dirks:** Mr. Speaker, I take umbrage at the member opposite's suggestion that we are not building schools. That's the first thing he said that was mistaken. In this Assembly we have been talking about the largest school build project in the history of Canada: 232 school projects, new schools, modernizations, renovations in virtually every school division across the province. So I do hope the member recognizes once and for all that this government is leading when it comes to school infrastructure.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

### Government Revenues

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Member for Red Deer-South asked an important question to the Minister of Finance about corporate taxes, and we've had several other questions today on corporate taxes. We all heard the canned response, but unfortunately I'm not convinced. [interjections] Sorry. To the Minister of Finance. We know we're all in this together. We know that everyone has to share . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry; we'll have to hear from the Minister of Finance now. The time has elapsed.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't feel like we're all in this together right now.

Before I go on – I won't have another chance – I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for his service in the Legislature. I've had the chance to work with him as a critic. He's always been a very honourable individual. He's got a great sense of humour. I wish him the best in his future endeavours.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I'm sorry, but your time has elapsed as well, so let us move on to the first supplemental.

**Mr. Casey:** Maybe I'll just ask my first question, then, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: what possible reason can there be for not considering an increase in corporate taxes?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I've been pretty clear on this. Maybe the member is a little older than I thought he was, and his hearing has gone, so let me say it one more time. A 1 per cent increase in taxes means that we're going to lose \$6 billion in investment in this province, and we'll lose 9,000 jobs. This government will not introduce measures that are going to kill jobs. Corporations are small and they're large. Many of our small corporations are employing just a few employees. We will do what we want to do to continue to make sure that Albertans work in this province and continue to pay taxes and make this the best province in the country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that increasing government revenues is essential, will the minister not consider reintroducing the old health care premium system as one method?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I thought I was pretty clear on this, but let me be very clear again. We are not – and I say we are not – introducing the health care premiums that Albertans have paid in the past. They were regressive, and the system had administration costs. The measures we take in the budget are aimed at protecting the most vulnerable, our working families, while fixing our fiscal foundation. Clearly, Albertans have stated that they are not in favour of the old system, and we will not be introducing it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

### 2:40 Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. AMVIC is still holding improper and potentially illegal investigations, and this government

simply doesn't get it. Some of these board members are not qualified. They're PC Party insiders. Their best qualification is that they're friends of the old minister. To the new minister: will you stop defending this clear case of patronage, do your job, protect Albertans, and clean up the board?

**Mr. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure you and this House that all appointments in Service Alberta follow a process in which candidates are vetted closely by the department. All appointments for agencies, boards, and commissions are merit based. I want to assure you and this House that the public appointees on AMVIC are there because of merit, sir.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the minister defended appointing an insider as the lead investigator at AMVIC, and later the old minister defended the merit and integrity of his board to the media despite the fact that AMVIC is well known for leading improper investigations. Now we've learned that the lead investigator resigned over this clear conflict of interest. Further, we're getting information that another insider from this board has resigned due to the same conflict of interest. Minister, even the insiders can see the problem. Why can't you?

**Mr. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, this hon. member keeps insisting upon a peculiar line of logic, that if somehow, some way a person in Alberta happens to know a member of the Progressive Conservative Party or perhaps voted for a member of the Conservative Party or shared an elevator ride with a member of the Conservative Party, they should not be eligible to serve on our agencies, boards, and commissions. If that was the case, we would certainly be depriving Albertans of a tremendous amount of the talent pool in this province.

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, despite recent resignations this government board is still full of friends of the old minister. Yesterday he became, and I quote, visibly angry when a reporter asked him about the credentials of his friends at the board. Minister, now that you've had some time to think about this situation, please tell me: what specific skills, qualifications do these board members have that other Albertans who applied for these public positions don't have?

**Mr. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, I feel like I've answered this question every day in this House this week. I'll give it another shot for the hon. member. What I'll say is that the folks who populate the board of AMVIC are hard-working professionals. They're passionate and dedicated Albertans. They have legal backgrounds. They have accounting backgrounds. Alberta is lucky to have them on the board.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

The bell has rung, which means Oral Question Period has now concluded. Today we heard 108 questions and responses, so thank you for that. In 30 seconds from now we will hear the first of six members' statements.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** We have two minutes allocated for each person speaking here. Let us begin with Calgary-Cross.

#### Retirement Farewell – Calgary-Cross

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to believe that 22 years ago I became the MLA for Calgary-Cross as a member of

Ralph's team. I've been honoured to serve with five Premiers, over 200 MLAs, and to be at the cabinet table for 10 years. As I look around this beautiful Assembly, I am overcome with incredible emotion that I feel at having worked with each of you. You really are my second family, and we've had many successes together, all of us. As minister of housing and urban affairs I was proud to develop and implement a 10-year plan to end homelessness in Alberta. Many said that it could not be done, Mr. Speaker. Today we've housed over 10,000 people.

Premier, like you I believe that aboriginal people need our support and encouragement. As the minister of children and youth services I hired Alberta's first aboriginal child advocate as well as the first aboriginal deputy minister to lead a new stand-alone division that I created for aboriginal children and youth in care. I also established the Alberta Vulnerable Infant Response Team, and we have over 750 infants and children that have received the supports they need to survive.

I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that I'm thankful to many people. I am thankful for the wise insight and counsel of my constituency board and my constituency assistants. I sincerely thank as well the hundreds of friends and volunteers who supported me in my six successful campaigns.

My life really has been blessed with a loving family and many dear friends, and I'm grateful and thankful to them all. It is exciting as I look forward to retiring from public life and enjoying more time with my incredible husband, Lanny, and our children.

Thank you, my friends. I will miss you, I will keep in touch, and I'm wishing you all of God's blessings in the future with this wonderful Premier that we have today.

Thank you, all, very much. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you for those heartfelt words.

Let us move on to Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Airdrie.

### Provincial Fiscal Policy

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, with a growing energy and focus on the task of bringing modern, progressive, and fair change to Alberta, I can say that in fact nobody in our caucus is retiring, so I'll have to forgo the moving goodbyes today and instead focus a bit on the issues at hand.

At a time when Albertans are worried about their jobs, the Premier wants them to pay an extra tax out of their own pockets for health care. The PCs aren't offering better health care or shorter wait times in emergency rooms; instead, they want the health care system to endure more cutbacks and have Albertans pay more, too. Anyone who has sat in a hospital with a loved one waiting for care knows that the Premier's revenue proposal is nothing more than a waiting room tax. This government wants Albertans to pay more and get less while they give away billions to the most profitable banks and corporations. PC priorities are not Albertans' priorities, and they're not ours either.

We've heard the Premier say that we need to tighten our belts 'cause we've had the best of everything until now, but Albertans know that that's simply not true: not when people are waiting over 70 hours to be admitted into emergency rooms, not when hundreds of kids' surgeries are being cancelled at the Stollery children's hospital because there simply aren't enough recovery beds. In prosperous times the PCs have allowed the services that families need to fall apart. They've failed to take us off the boom-and-bust revenue roller coaster, and they've failed to save for a rainy day. Now they expect working- and middle-class Albertans to foot the bill. That's not leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Last night the Premier asked Albertans to settle for less. He wants to balance the budget on the backs of Alberta families while his corporate friends keep their generous tax breaks and their luxury golf courses. That's not the kind of leadership Albertans need or expect.

It's time for a new kind of leadership that puts Albertans ahead of special interests, the kind of leadership that makes sure Albertans get a fair deal, and that's the kind of Alberta the NDP will ensure we build.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Retrospective by the Member for Airdrie

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, as I stand for possibly the final time in this House, I do so with a heart full of gratitude. I'm grateful to my family and to the constituents of Airdrie for giving me the opportunity to represent them. All of us in this Chamber, of course, have different reasons for becoming MLAs. For me, I wanted to make sure that when my four boys are grown and must decide where they want to live and raise their families, they choose Alberta. I want them to be able to inherit a province of limitless opportunities and the highest quality of life. In short, I want them to call Alberta home with the same love and pride that I do. That's what I've been fighting for, and it's why my heart is so full today, because finally, after seven exhausting years – and they've left some scars – what I and so many other Albertans have been fighting to see happen is actually going to happen.

2:50

Tomorrow our Premier will unveil a long-term plan that will see our province placed firmly on the path to a sustainable and balanced budget, a debt-free future, the lowest tax regime in the country, and a heritage fund that will ensure that the Alberta advantage is protected long after our energy revenues are gone. Don't underestimate the importance of what this means. This plan is a critical turning point for our province. Following through with it will bless the lives of our children and their children for decades. We must not blink, not even for a second. We must follow through with it this time. We owe it to our children.

Alberta is the best place in the world to live and raise a family. May we ever keep it that way is my humble prayer.

In closing, I want to share the end of my favourite poem.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you for those heartfelt comments as well.

Let us move on to Red Deer-South, followed by Lesser Slave Lake.

### Retrospective by the Member for Red Deer-South

**Mr. Dallas:** Mr. Speaker, seven years have gone by in a heartbeat, yet I struggle to summarize in two minutes. I want to start by acknowledging the contribution of family in our service. The support of my wife, Jackie, our children, and family has been integral to performing duties every day since 2008.

I have always held the public service in high regard. I leave with the knowledge that the women and men serving Alberta act with passion, talent, and energy. They deserve our thanks every day. Throughout Alberta I have supported and worked beside individuals



whom I admire. I treasure their generosity, insight, and friendship. To my constituency, legislative, and ministerial staff: know that your contribution makes a positive difference in the lives of Albertans every day. Thank you. To all members of this Assembly: I have been proud to share in your empathy, compassion, and action to support the vulnerable, the ill, the elderly, and all Albertans who rely on us.

My work has been an incredible experience, from child intervention policy to youth homelessness to visitability and more, and has reinforced why government must continuously strive to support all Albertans. My assignments as parliamentary assistants in two portfolios, as a legislative secretary, and as the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations all led me to the same conclusion: when we lead as Albertans, we succeed as Albertans.

Albertans are committed to global leadership in environmental sustainability; to enhancing our reputation as a great place to invest and do business; and to welcoming those who aspire to raise their families in a province that values hard work, creativity, and an entrepreneurial spirit. I cherished the responsibility to take our message to the world.

My city, Red Deer, is a place where vision, ambition, and collaboration lead the way, and I am honoured to have served.

Thank you, Red Deer. Thank you, Alberta. [Standing ovation]

#### 4-H Premier's Award Winner

**Ms Calahasen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going anywhere, but I would like to take a moment to recognize the achievements of a very special young lady from High Prairie, in my constituency, Ms Jess Verstappen, introduced earlier. Ms Verstappen was chosen from among an exceptionally strong group of candidates to receive this year's 4-H Premier's award. This is no ordinary award. The Premier's award is the highest honour for Alberta's 4-H program and is given out to a 4-H member who shows exceptional leadership, communication, and personal development skills.

Jess exemplifies everything that is extraordinary about 4-H youth in this province. She is a remarkable young woman and is committed to being a steward of our land and supporting Alberta's rural communities. With a strong agricultural family background Jess has been a member of the Coyote Acres 4-H Club in High Prairie, where she held numerous positions, including president, vice-president, and treasurer. Jess has participated in 4-H activities across the province, including selections, regional winter camps, provincial sheep shows, and regional summer camps. As a Premier's award winner Jess represents Alberta at numerous 4-H events here and across North America.

I'm sure all members will agree with me about how fortunate we are to have our province represented by such a fine young ambassador and how fortunate we are to have such a wonderful 4-H program in Alberta; 4-H is the longest running youth organization in our province, approaching 100 years of shaping the lives of youth and adults in Alberta.

By following the 4-H motto, Learn to Do by Doing, members take part in activities that meet their interests, increase their knowledge, and develop their life skills, which help members become successful and accomplished members of society. Agriculture is vital to our province, and the 4-H program helps to develop tomorrow's leaders. Our government is proud to support this important program for our province's youth.

Please join me in congratulating Jess Verstappen on this great honour and acknowledging all 4-H members and leaders who make this program such a great success.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

#### 28th Legislature

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are heading into a spring election. Long-term members of this Assembly have been giving their farewell speeches, others are already campaigning. So what has changed since the last election? Well, we have a new Premier with a new slogan: We Are under New Management. It sounds great. It's a good slogan. I suspect it feels good, too, for those who were so disappointed with the last group of managers. The Queen's loyal opposition has been decimated since the last election. It was decimated without a vote, and the people responsible for violating that public trust are welcome with open arms into this team of new managers.

Here is the problem for all Albertans. We added a couple of new members to the management team, and then we added a bunch of floor-crossers who exemplify the maxim that integrity doesn't pay as well as self-interest. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that not much has changed with this management team. There is a new boss, but he's trying to fix a government with the same people and the same political machine that corrupted the government in the first place.

Nothing symbolizes this problem greater than the \$10 million taxpayers will give to a golf course. When we asked to postpone that misguided spending, the minister of environment said, "That doesn't make . . . financial sense." The Minister of Energy said, "It is a prudent investment for [this government] to repair this golf course." Now they are all saying: we should re-evaluate this spending, but please just ignore the fact that we refuse to withdraw the expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, this government wants us to believe it's changing its mind, but that's the same mind that whistles when the wind blows through it. I apologize if the government minds are insulted, but just as they passed into law this absurd paid position called a fish guardian – it would be laughable except this fish guardian can now enter and search private property without a warrant. This is a tragic violation of property rights.

So as we head into next month's election, Mr. Speaker, I only hope Albertans do get the message and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I regret the time has expired, and we must move on.

Hon. Government House Leader, you have caught my attention.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent of the Assembly to continue past 3 p.m. notwithstanding rule 7(7).

[Unanimous consent granted]

#### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader and Minister of Human Services.

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now would like to give oral notice of the intention to introduce Bill 25, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2015, which will be sponsored by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** We have several, so let's keep these as brief as we can, please, in the interest of time, starting with Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the Minister of Health.

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Premier I'm pleased to rise today and table the requisite number of copies of the Métis and the First Nations women's councils on economic security 2014 reports and recommendations and government of Alberta responses.

Thank you.

3:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, followed by Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Mandel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the five requisite copies of the Health Quality Council of Alberta's annual report 2013-2014. This report was submitted to me in accordance with the provisions of section 24(1) of the Health Quality Council of Alberta Act, which requires the HQCA board to table an annual report each fiscal year to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. In the report you will find an overview of the HQCA's accomplishments and activities in the past year. A condensed version of the report is also available for viewing on the HQCA website.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(6) of the Election Act I would like to table five copies of the report by the Chief Electoral Officer titled Report on the October 27, 2014 By-elections in: Calgary-Elbow, Calgary-Foothills, Calgary-West, Edmonton-Whittemud. Copies of this report are being distributed to members today.

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

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to table five copies of the Alberta Economic Development Authority's annual activity report. This year's activity report celebrates 20 years of the Alberta Economic Development Authority providing sound advice to the government of Alberta. Since its inception the authority has proven to be a responsive, informed, and committed partner. Over the last two decades it has provided advice and insight on a broad range of economic issues, including productivity, innovation, transportation, carbon capture, market access, to name just a few. Over the past year the authority has been active in benchmarking Alberta's competitiveness in relation to other jurisdictions and deeply involved in the province's innovation systems and water strategies, among other timely issues. I encourage all members of this House to read this report.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a letter and a petition from the concerned citizens of the hamlet of Enchant and surrounding communities, 75 signatures asking Alberta Transportation to lower the speed limit on highway 526 in the vicinity of the hamlet. The five requisite copies have been made.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a publication by the Alberta Teachers' Association entitled Who Will Teach Us? It provides a snapshot of the effects that the Premier's deep cuts will have on the K to 12 education system in Alberta. The Premier said that his government will hold the line on education investment, which will directly contribute to skyrocketing classroom sizes and a lack of teachers within them. I table this document in the hopes that the government will not just hold the line when it comes to the future of our students and children in this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an e-mail I received from my constituent Adrienne Webb outlining the difficulties that she encountered in getting approval for a service dog and some suggestions to improve that process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My optimism has paid off, and I, indeed, have located the tablings that I was looking for. The first tabling that I have is an e-mail from Leah Dal Ponte. She has written about the wild horse cull and capture. She's quite frustrated at the lack of response to her letters to government, and she personally is heartbroken, ashamed, and feeling helpless that all of her entreaties were ignored.

The second tabling, also an e-mail, from Maureen Hurly of Calgary is also about the wild horse cull, making the point that there is no Disney ending for these wild horses, that the government has been unclear about the official position of whether they're genetically different or not, and that the sensitive landscape that the horses supposedly damage is full of ATVs, cattle grazing, oil and gas activity, and logging activities.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes our Routine except for points of order. I believe we have one that was expressed at 2:04 this afternoon, and it was expressed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Please proceed with your citation and your point of order.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against a Member**

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I raise my point of order on 23(h) and (i), in all due respect to the Minister of Energy, and the allegation that I have somehow prior to coming into this Legislature or even in this Legislature advocated for more regulation in the electricity industry when I am absolutely on record – and he knows this – that I was absolutely opposed to the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, otherwise known as Bill 50. I opposed this when I debated that minister in his own riding some six, seven years ago, and he knows that. Now he raises the allegation to impugn my reputation, and that is just not – not – acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I was opposed to those two HVDC lines because this government was spending a billion dollars more per line, for an extra \$2 billion, and got nothing for it. I'm on record, and he knows that. He knows I'm on record to – you want me to stop, I can tell, but I want to really wax him on this one, Mr. Speaker.

I will tell you that he should retract that statement. I am not on record anywhere asking for more regulation. I'm on record opposed to that legislation and every regulation attached thereto.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader briefly, please.

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, that's very difficult to follow. First, on behalf of the government caucus I wanted to thank this member for his service the last three years. I'm not rising on a funeral announcement here, but I just wanted to indicate that despite that his comments have nothing to do with regulation and despite the fact that he wanted to run as a PC candidate this election, I'm going to withdraw the comment on behalf of the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Speaker, this one is on me.

**The Speaker:** Not unlike the eighth wonder of the world. Thank you.

Well, hon. members, we've had a withdrawal. It's really a point of clarification. I believe, hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, you would be satisfied with the withdrawal and with the fact that you had a chance to clarify your position, so we don't have to get into any other ruling on that. That is noted, and that particular point of order is now closed.

With that, let us move on.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

#### Bill 24

#### Public Sector Services Continuation Repeal Act

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to move third reading of Bill 24, the Public Sector Services Continuation Repeal Act.

Bill 45 was passed by the House in December 2013 but was never proclaimed and never put into force. Since that time a new government with a new Premier, who has put this government and this province under new management, has come into place. Earlier this month the Premier announced that the government would be reviewing its approach to public-sector relations and that we would put in place an essential services model of legislation. That work, Mr. Speaker, is now under way.

Mr. Speaker, given this change in the province's approach to labour legislation it is clear that the Public Sector Services Continuation Act is no longer required. Maintaining public safety and ensuring the public has access to essential services during times of labour disputes will be part of any legislation that is brought forward. New legislation will also align with the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision regarding labour legislation. We have already begun reviewing the essential services models of legislation that are in place with most other jurisdictions in the country, and we plan to table that legislation in the near future.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, this withdrawal of Bill 45, the repeal, indicates, we hope, a new period of mutual respect and co-operation with our employees and their representatives, and I hope that all members of the House will join me in supporting this.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 24, the Public Sector Services Continuation Repeal Act. Of course, I just wanted to point out, again, that less than a year ago this member voted for Bill 45. Now he's voting to repeal it. So he voted for it before he voted against it, and I just wanted to make sure that he was certain this time that he wants to get rid of it.

I think it's very important here that – you know, you need consistency and certainty when it comes to labour relations, and the fact is that there were a lot of members on the other side that voted for this legislation who are now voting against it. So I guess, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point that out.

We look forward to further debate on this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with interest to speak on Bill 24. Certainly, I take a great deal of satisfaction in seeing that this bill is being repealed. We know that we fought a very hard and long battle last winter in regard to Bill 45. I think it's always a good reminder to know where these things come from so that we can learn and that in the future it doesn't happen again.

Quite frankly, what happened in regard to Bill 45 was a very sort of callous attempt to make an attack on the ability to negotiate and to strike if need be. The government saw an opportunity to exercise power on this issue in Bill 45, and indeed it was beaten back quite handily. So while it was never proclaimed, certainly it always kind of sat there, simmering in the background as a symbol of something that needed to be gone.

Always we know, Mr. Speaker, that there's a tension between workers and management. It can be a constructive tension that creates better working conditions, safer working conditions, creates opportunities for better pay, for more equitable distribution of the production of wealth that we have in this province. It allows us healthier working conditions in the widest possible way. You know, that never usually comes out of just everyone agreeing around a table. It sometimes is the product of tension. So we recognize that tension, and we recognize that, ultimately, more sane and reasonable, I think, circumstances have resulted from that.

But if we didn't fight this Bill 45 in the first place, we wouldn't have got here at all. Indeed, the rights and the freedoms that were in jeopardy with Bill 45 were won by previous generations of people who chose to fight for the capacity of free speech and for the right to bargain collectively, the right to organize together to improve wages, health, and safety in working conditions for all Canadians. Certainly, as Alberta New Democrats we weren't afraid to stand up. I would venture to say that without thousands of Albertans standing up against Bill 45 and remaining united in standing against Bill 45, we wouldn't be here today repealing this same odious and difficult bill as well.

We know that there has been a Supreme Court order on this kind of behaviour stemming from similar circumstances in Saskatchewan, so we would know that Bill 45 was, in fact, illegal anyway and needed to be repealed. You know, circumstances being as they may, we're happy to see it repealed here today. We will take it as a symbol of our solidarity with the working people here in the province of Alberta, the power of us to stand together, to fight for more equality and social justice, for better working conditions, for fair wages, and to know that we can utilize that power to generate laws that protect working people in this province and that push back against unjust legislation such as Bill 45.

So on behalf of all working people and on behalf of the Alberta New Democrats we certainly will stand behind this bill. It's a very fine, fine day. Hopefully, we can pass this thing today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is now available. Should anyone wish to speak on 29(2)(a), please let me know. I see no one.

Are there any other speakers? I see none.

The hon. minister to close debate.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will rise to close debate because I believe that repealing the Public Sector Services Continuation Act will be the first step toward a new era in a mutually respectful, two-way relationship with our public-sector employees and those that represent them in bargaining.

To the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition I would say – and this would be the second time today that the hon. member has been reminded – that a lot of things can change in a year, Mr. Speaker. The very best and brightest of his caucus is now on this side of the House since last year. The government is under new management since last year. In fact, through a Supreme Court of Canada decision not very many weeks ago the actual labour law in this country has changed.

Add all that together with our Premier and our government's genuine desire to go forward in a mutually respectful, positive way with those who do the great work every day that Albertans love, who provide the services that Albertans are so very proud of, about 213,000 men and women who get paid, you know, through the taxpayer and through the decisions of this government. Those people are important, and this is an important way for our government to say so.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll close and respectfully ask members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this bill.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 24 read a third time]

### **Bill 12 Common Business Number Act**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today at third reading to discuss the Common Business Number Act. This bill will ensure that Alberta has a business-friendly environment by reducing red tape and improving services for business. Adopting the common business number will expand opportunities for our government to simplify business registration processes, modernize and improve service delivery, offer secure services online, and improve program compliance.

With that, I move third reading of the Common Business Number Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the Alberta New Democrats do support this bill. Creating some correlation between different systems using common business numbers is a good idea. We know that this is something that has been done in other provinces; notably, the New Democrat government in Manitoba did so. You know, it's always important.

I just want to point out that always when we talk about red tape and so forth – right? – you move regulation from one place to

another, not necessarily just removing it from all sectors of any given business community or sector. You do need regulation to ensure a level playing field, to ensure that people are not cheating and so forth. Where does regulation belong? This is something that we should all reflect on, I think, here in this Legislature. With the sort of glib concept of, "Red tape is bad, so cut it; make it, you know, a free-whatever-market thing," then the regulation will simply move from a public entity such as this House here to a corporate level. We saw on so many occasions that where government ceded their responsibility to regulate, then larger companies and corporations will do so, but they do it without the democratic element that we provide here in the House.

It's just a word of caution. It's something I've been reflecting on. This is a good bill, certainly, but let's not forget that our primary responsibility is to in fact make regulation in order for good governance to take place here in this province.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to speak to this bill. It's a good bill. It seems to move us forward on making things easier for businesses to continue to be successful and also cuts out some of the bureaucracy and allows a common business number, that has been seen to work in other provinces. I will note that Alberta seems to have been a little bit slower than other provinces in moving in this direction. I would encourage us to continue looking up best practices where they're available and to move a little more swiftly on it.

**3:20**

Just commenting on what the hon. member just stated, you know, we often do look at regulation and see it as a bad thing. Then, on the other hand, regulation is often what protects us. It gives us safety in standards and the protections that we hope for when we purchase goods, when we go through processes, when we build homes and the like. Regulation is often the stuff that's necessary to ensure a level playing field, to ensure quality standards and the like. I, too, understand that. We should always look at that as our responsibility to protect the public and to ensure that there are quality goods and services being provided and that they're not getting sold a bill of goods.

In any event, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I applaud the government for moving forward on this initiative.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

I see no one. Are there any other speakers?

**Mr. Khan:** Just really quickly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to first extend my gratitude to the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for doing the heavy lifting with this bill. He's done a remarkable job on this. I also want to thank the opposing members for their speeches. As they said, this is a good bill. This will create efficiency. This is something that the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education has promised his stakeholders in terms of reducing red tape. It's a very good bill. It will deliver a benefit for our business community in Alberta, particularly our small-business community.

Again I just want to extend my gratitude to the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for his exemplary work in bringing this bill forward. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

I see no one. Is there anyone else who wishes to speak?

If not, could I call on the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park to close debate?

**Mr. Quest:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of quick comments. I appreciate the opportunity to work on this. Just in response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder and the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo about regulation, I did have the opportunity to lead the small-business strategy for Alberta, what will become the small-business strategy for Alberta document, and what we heard from small business, really, wasn't so much about regulations and what they were. It was their intent, of course, to comply. What they really asked for is easier access to that information. We're moving towards that. This is also something else that they expressed a strong interest in. So I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to carry this bill through the process.

With that, I would ask that you call the question.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, that closes the debate, and the question has been called.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 12 read a third time]

#### Bill 14

#### Agricultural Societies Amendment Act, 2015

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and speak on behalf of the minister of agriculture and move third reading of Bill 14, the Agricultural Societies Amendment Act, 2015.

Since 1886, Mr. Speaker, before Alberta existed as a province, agricultural societies have been working to enhance the agricultural industry and improve awareness in our communities. Over the years the role of agricultural societies has changed with the changing times, expanding beyond the scope of agriculture to include the services provided and enhancing the quality of Albertans' lives. Today the province has over 300 ag societies administering over 3,000 activities every year, overseeing the operations of close to 700 community facilities. From farmers' markets to fairs to curling rinks they are touching the everyday lives of people in their community. Our agricultural societies have evolved, and the legislation must continue to evolve with them to ensure that meeting the needs of these communities is served.

Bill 14 is about just that, Mr. Speaker. The Agricultural Societies Amendment Act will modernize the legislation, ensure that it aligns with the Societies Act, ensure that all agricultural societies have effective bylaws in place, and recognize that large and small agricultural societies are flexible in how they can be structured to their unique needs.

The amendments, for example, broaden the language to recognize that agricultural societies serve more than just agricultural communities. The legislation clarifies the responsibilities of societies to incorporate under the act, including their ability to enter into contracts; to purchase, to own, and to dispose of property and assets; and to enter into indemnity.

The provisions will also address issues like maintaining the members' registration and registered offices, a process for major discussions and decisions along alignments, dissolutions, liability protection of the society's director.

**Mr. Anglin:** Say that three times.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's always nice to have help out there.

A key part to the amendments also involves removing some of the overly prescriptive items from legislation. Instead societies will now have the flexibility to address items like membership fees, eligibility within their bylaws, and what can be tailored to meet their needs. To ensure good governance, Mr. Speaker, minimum requirements for bylaws will be outlined in the regulations, and new amendment bylaws will be vetted by the department.

Amending any legislation is done with a great deal of care, attention to detail, and the Agricultural Societies Amendment Act is no different. In drafting the amendments, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development worked closely with the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies. All members were invited to take part in consultation meetings, and approximately 200 people participated through this, Mr. Speaker. As a result of these changes, many agricultural societies will update their bylaws and will have three years to comply with this. The Agriculture and Rural Development department will work closely with agricultural societies and the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies to provide ongoing support to facilitate these changes.

I want to thank all of my colleagues who participated in the discussion of this bill, Mr. Speaker. Good questions were raised during debate, and I want to address a few of these points. The first is concerning why provisions for amalgamation have been added. While agricultural societies did have the ability to merge, there's no clearly defined process currently outlined in the legislation. We want to make sure that agricultural societies have a well-defined process to follow. The new provisions, which reflect the procedures outlined in the Societies Act, outline a clear, consistent process should societies wish for whatever reason to amalgamate. For example, societies may have changed recruiting and retaining volunteers and maintaining their infrastructure to choose to consolidate their resources with another society to benefit both organizations.

Another point was brought up during the debate, Mr. Speaker, around the removal of the governance guidance guarantee in the act. The current act allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to provide a governance guidance guarantee of an agricultural society's borrowing. This outdated clause is not one that has been used frequently by societies. There are currently no loan guarantees under the act, and there has been no intention to offer any guarantee in the future.

We met with the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies early in the process to discuss all the proposed changes, including the removal of the guarantee. AAAS indicated that there is no issue for their members.

Mr. Speaker, this is the last general comment from the debate that I'd like to address. There were some concerns expressed on moving the provisions to the regulation instead of having them remain in legislation. Moving some of these provisions to regulations helps the legislation remain relevant so we don't have to reopen the act to change every minute detail. It allows the act to serve its intended purpose, to provide the high-level framework for the continued successful operation of agricultural societies in Alberta. There will be a formal process to change regulations, and the changes will be made in consultation with the societies. These changes give us the ability to react, to change the role of the agricultural societies in our rural communities, and to be more flexible to their needs as they evolve.

I recognize the important role that agricultural societies have in Alberta. I think that we should all have the common goal of supporting our local organizations and helping them improve the quality of life in their communities. I'm confident that these amendments will update the legislation to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our agricultural societies and of all Albertans.

I urge the members of this Assembly to support the legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

3:30

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the Alberta New Democrats do support this bill. I think it's very important to maintain flexible and modern regulation in regard to agricultural societies. Agricultural societies provide a very important pivot point for not just economic development in rural areas but also social and community development. As the hon. member pointed out, several agricultural societies even precede the formation of this province and indeed helped to form some of the very earliest forms of governance and community development, that still carry on today right across this province. We know as well that the regulations need to accommodate for the changing and expanding roles that agricultural societies have in different communities around the province.

As I travel around from place to place, a number of societies stand out in my mind. Camrose is a perfect example of one that's evolved tremendously to provide a whole universe of entertainment and community development. It's in close proximity to the big show, the jamboree, that takes place in Camrose. It's quite a sophisticated, large, nonprofit organization that deals in many millions of dollars. It's important for them to have that flexibility to move into new markets around festivals and casinos and all the other things that they do. That's important, too.

I know that our support for agricultural societies here, from the Legislature outwards, is very important, too, because of course we see a very changing dynamic in terms of population around the province. Some communities are rapidly losing their population, but at the same time it's very important that they don't lose those social and community structures that can help to gain back and create a nucleus for growth in the future for communities around the province.

Certainly, I'm happy to see this legislation being updated and modernized through this particular bill. I'm very pleased for it. In my own family, in fact, we have a long history on my mother's side of participating in agricultural societies in Vermilion, Alberta. I know that from several generations of our own family on my mother's side and then even myself when I was growing up and working with the Vermilion Agricultural Society and so forth, it really helped to not just make Vermilion the great town it is today but also helped in my own development and sense of community as I grew up.

Thanks for the bill, and certainly the New Democrats will support it.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals will be supporting this bill. It seems to move agricultural societies in an updated fashion that will allow them to do much of their good work, both on the economic side and the social and community development side, in a much more robust fashion. It's a good bill, and I'm looking forward to seeing what more good comes from our agricultural societies. As was noted, they've been with us from the very beginning and will continue to support and foster good community spirit throughout this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see no one. Are there any other speakers?

If not, hon. Member for Little Bow, do you wish to close debate?

**Mr. Donovan:** I close debate, Mr. Speaker, and call the question.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 14 read a third time]

### Bill 19

#### Education Amendment Act, 2015

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Minister of Education to move third and final reading of Bill 19, the Education Amendment Act, 2015.

This is legislation that through a series of amendments will assist in ensuring that the Education Act, upon its proclamation, is successful in focusing education on the student, supporting educational choice, and enabling school boards to be more collaborative and responsive to their students' needs. Therefore, I hope you will join me in supporting this very important piece of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a great deal of commentary on this. I think that some of my colleagues have spoken on it already. Yes, the Alberta New Democrats are choosing to support Bill 19. However, I think there are a number of issues that just need to be illuminated here in regard to this bill. I know that because this is an amendment act, it curtails our capacity to go back to different aspects of the Education Act that have problems.

Certainly, I think that there are three areas that I just wanted to focus in on, first of all in regard to the definition of residency requirements for students and then in sections 2 and 3 of this bill, where they focus on the student rather than the parent. You know, it's just really important that when we talk about residency and the money that follows, especially, students with special needs, we have very careful consideration of areas that probably provide more special-needs education and that the money is properly following the student that requires that special-needs education. I think that probably my colleagues used the School for the Deaf as an example. There are others as well. It's just really important that we make sure that certain school boards don't get shortchanged – right? – based on the fact that they do provide more special-needs education, that other places around the province maybe don't have – and we're, of course, happy to share because that's what we should do – and that the money is there to look after the student when they move to a different place.

The other issue that I wanted to point out was in regard to the capacity for school boards to perhaps vote out a member of their board if they are deemed to be somehow not in compliance with a code of conduct and so forth. You know, this is very problematic because, of course, you can use this any number of ways. Remember that trustees are elected through a municipal, democratic process, so it's very important that we do not empower boards, specifically, to have some code of conduct or a hammer that they can hold over an individual member and potentially take out that member, who has been democratically elected to serve. You can imagine some facsimile of that here in this House, where you would have some capacity to take out other members, to vote somebody out of the Assembly. I mean, that would be obviously illogical, and we wouldn't entertain that, but then we're having some version of it, I see, unless I'm reading this wrong, with trustees being allowed

to use a code of conduct to vote out an individual member that was otherwise democratically elected into that position. So I just wanted to point that out.

Then the other issue that I wanted to just touch on quickly, Mr. Speaker, is in regard to the minister's capacity to dissolve school boards and then appoint members. I think we talked about that a bit this afternoon in regard to the Northland school division. You know, it's just been going on too long, right? That happened at least four or maybe – I don't know – five years ago, when Northland was dissolved. I think a short-term limit for the interim appointed, nonelected board should be put in place to ensure that we don't have something like what just happened with the Northland school board, where we had five years of appointed trusteeship. The issues that I think maybe precipitated the dissolution of that board in the first place are only getting worse, right? With the problems with absenteeism and low graduation rates, retention of workers and teachers up in the Northland school board, the problem has only festered and carried on over these last five years.

**3:40**

I'm not saying that that's just simply a result of the dissolution of that board and the choice to have an appointed board for five long years, but certainly I think it probably contributed to that. Sometimes we make regulation here to protect us from ourselves, and I think that in this case having the limitation of one year of an appointed board upon the dissolution of an elected board by the Minister of Education would be more reasonable and maybe wouldn't have us in the position that we are in today, with this overdue, difficult situation in Northland.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take leave. Certainly, as I say, the Alberta New Democrats will vote in favour of Bill 19.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals, too, will be voting in favour of these amendments. We, too, noted the residency concerns and ensuring that money is properly flowing from various school boards, from residences to the location where the child is getting the support they need.

Also, there is a concern out there by many board trustees about the potential for a trustee to be removed under these codes of conduct and, if they're being the so-called sticky wicket or the like, maybe being forced out of their position even though they're democratically elected to do their job. I think the minister needs to keep apprised of that, ensure that democracy is served and that people are able to do their work and carry out what they've been elected to do.

The third thing is also, simply, the situation in Northland school division. There is an amendment that deals with the trustee and getting duly elected boards, that we have to have a function that tries to fill that capacity. Now, I'm not certain, but I probably agreed with the government's decision when they went into Northland school division when they saw the problems that were arising out of that district. I'm very disappointed that very little progress has been made in trying to get kids educated in that community, and I think we can do better from that. Having an amendment that actually reflects getting the proper people in place to support the community and getting the proper resources to that community is imperative.

I will close by sort of saying: look, we have an Education Act, we now have some amendments, we have an Inspiring Education document, and all these things are well and good, Mr. Speaker, but if we don't commit the necessary investments to our public education

system, well, it all amounts to, I guess, a hill of beans. You know, you really have to put investments into getting our kids as much education as possible to be ready for the challenges they will face as they grow older and get out into the workforce and raise families and want to become part of the actively engaged citizenry.

I will note that, in my view at least, our supports for public education when I came into this Legislature were higher on a per-student basis, we were doing more robust things, and our education system seemed to be better supported by this government than it currently is. My hope is that we turn the corner and can see it again as an investment and get busy with providing early childhood learning opportunities and investing in education. I note that 25 per cent of the children now in the Calgary board of education are English as a second language students, and we must ensure that they're getting ready and prepared for, I guess, life in Canada. It's not easy to do that with less money. You have to be ensuring that they're getting the help and support they need.

In any event, as mentioned, we'll be supporting these amendments, and we look forward to this government investing in public education. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I don't see anyone wishing to take up that opportunity.

Are there any other speakers?

If not, the hon. minister to close debate.

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we close debate, and I thank the hon. members for all of their excellent comments.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 19 read a third time]

## Bill 21

### Safety Codes Amendment Act, 2015

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to move third reading of Bill 21, the Safety Codes Amendment Act, 2015.

I'd like to thank all members who participated in second reading and Committee of the Whole debates for their comments and wide support for this bill. I would also like to thank the staff of the Department of Municipal Affairs, who have worked very hard to put this bill together, as well as the Safety Codes Council, the safety codes co-ordinating committee, and all their many subcommittees that contributed to this bill.

Bill 21 will provide for the timely adoption of codes and standards, will strengthen the administration of the act in unaccredited municipalities, will provide greater flexibility for municipalities to deal with the development of private sewage-disposal systems, and will strengthen the current compliance tool kit under the act by making administrative penalties available.

Mr. Speaker, these changes will strengthen Alberta's safety codes system, and I would ask that all members support Bill 21. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other speakers? I see none.

Hon. member, do you wish to, then, just close debate and we'll go on with the vote?

**Mr. Casey:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 21 read a third time]

**Bill 22**  
**Skin Cancer Prevention (Artificial Tanning) Act**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Quest:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to bring forward Bill 22, the Skin Cancer Prevention (Artificial Tanning) Act, for third reading.

The dangers of tanning and the risk of skin cancer have already been highlighted extensively during debate on this bill. Melanoma, skin cancer, is a preventable form of cancer, but unfortunately it's on the rise in our province. Research shows that the use of tanning equipment, especially before the age of 35, increases the risk of melanoma by 59 per cent. We also know that nearly 20 per cent of teens under 18 have already used artificial tanning equipment. What's more, one-third of 17-year-old girls have visited a tanning salon, yet only 3 per cent of parents believe their teenagers have used artificial tanning.

Mr. Speaker, projections show that nearly 700 Albertans will be affected by melanoma skin cancer in 2017. The hope is that through Bill 22, the skin cancer prevention act, we'll start to see these numbers decrease. Nine jurisdictions already have legislation in place that imposes some form of age restriction on artificial tanning. Bill 22 is our opportunity to catch up with others who've already taken action to protect our youth. This legislation will also help adults make informed choices about this risky practice. When passed, Bill 22 not only protects our youth; it also educates our adult Albertans about the dangers of UV radiation through required health warnings.

I'm very pleased with the broad support that this bill has already received, not only from health advocate groups but by members of this Assembly. Bill 22 also has support from the association representing about one-third of the businesses offering tanning services.

In terms of enforcement Bill 22 was drafted to support a variety of options, including a process to investigate Albertans' complaints about businesses that they believe are breaking the law, test purchases by secret shoppers who are under 18 years of age, and escalating fines for businesses caught breaking the law multiple times. The Minister of Health will appoint enforcement officers once regulations are developed, and regulations will be developed with input from stakeholders.

The bottom line is that the government has the responsibility to protect youth from harmful activities and provide adults with information on health risks to help them make informed choices. I would ask that all members support Bill 22.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals will be supporting this legislation. It seems to be a proactive move in lessening skin cancer and moving us forward into an age where we can eliminate obvious dangers to people in this province. It's one that we wholeheartedly support. I hope that we can look forward to more proactive legislation of this kind. We often here in Alberta tend to move slowly on these things. I note that we were the last province, I think, to introduce seat belt legislation, the last province to finally ban smoking in restaurants, and the list goes on and on. We should try to move a little bit quicker on this public safety/public health file. We don't always have to be laggards on these things.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments, and we can move on.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the Alberta New Democrats do support this legislation as well. We know that the prevalence of skin cancer in our society is troubling, and I think this should be part of a longer, more concerted effort to help to inform and change behaviours around exposure to dangerous forms of sunlight as well over the next number of months and years. In other jurisdictions around the world such as Australia, you know, they made it a big national effort to work in educating the public around exposure to sunlight and to dangerous levels of sunshine. Also, tanning beds around our own country and across different jurisdictions around the world have already been severely curtailed.

You know, I would hope that we could perhaps create a culture where people, even after they're 18 years old, just would choose not to use something like this because of the dangerous effects on skin such as melanoma. It's a step that we can take. Certainly, I know that not long ago these same tanning people were marketing to kids: "For high school grad get a tan" and all this kind of stuff. We've, I think, perhaps slowed that process down. We'll eliminate it by passing this bill. Like I say, there are a whole other range of educative things that we can do to have the public maybe not choose to use this kind of service at all, even after they turn 18, and that we're properly protecting ourselves against the dangerous effects of exposure to sunlight in general.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available for anyone who wishes to chime in.

If not, are there other speakers? The hon. Minister of Health, please.

**Mr. Mandel:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I won't be long. I want to recognize and thank the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for bringing this forward and sponsoring this bill. It's a very important bill, especially when we realize the challenges and problems it creates for so many people 18 and under. When we had the first presentation, first reading, we had people here from across the province who had experienced the challenge they've faced as a result of being in tanning beds too often, the melanoma and the cancer that they've developed. It's very sad. We hope that this bill will help to eliminate any kind of involvement of those under 18 years of age in the tanning salons but also have tanning salons recognize inside their facilities to those that are coming in that there are dangers with tanning beds. We would hope that all members would support this bill. It's vitally important to do this. We think this is a great step forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see no one.

Are there other speakers?

If not, the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park to close debate.

**Mr. Quest:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Health for the opportunity to carry what I think is an important bill. It protects our youth. It educates adults. It will result in a lower number of skin cancer incidents. I'd also like to just point out, as I mentioned in the opening comments, that the associations representing some of the larger groups that offer indoor tanning already have restrictions around youth tanning and so on,



so this will level the playing field and ensure that everybody does the same thing.

With that, I would ask that you call the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The debate has been closed. The question has been called.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 22 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 23

#### Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2015

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy and Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to rise on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to speak to and move second reading of Bill 23, the Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2015.

The proposed amendments in this act will change the operations and funding model for the civil forfeiture office, or CFO, as I'll refer to it, Mr. Speaker. The proposed amendments will create a regulated civil forfeiture fund. This will improve transparency by setting out what money goes into and out of the fund. One of the things that will be permitted to be paid out of the fund is the expenses incurred in obtaining forfeitures; that is, the cost of obtaining and managing forfeitures will now be paid from the forfeitures themselves.

These amendments will also change other business processes, including prohibiting a person's objection to administrative forfeiture from being used against that person in the criminal trial; permitting regulations to be made which would list offences that cause bodily harm or profit; changing the current name to the civil forfeiture and restitution act to avoid confusion with the Victims of Crime Act; and making technical and minor improvements to business operations. I'll provide some details about the proposed amendments, Mr. Speaker.

The legislation will establish a civil forfeiture fund and clearly set out what money becomes part of the fund and what the money can be used for. To put it simply, proceeds from forfeited property will be paid into the fund. The fund will then be available to support grants for community-based crime prevention or victim programs, comply with court orders to return property to individual victims or innocent third-party creditors, pay the expenses spent storing and selling property, and recover certain operational expenses.

Mr. Speaker, an expense recovery model will allow the CFO to pay the government's cost to obtain forfeitures from the proceeds of the forfeitures themselves. This is not a new approach. Every other province with a civil forfeiture program permits some or all operational expenses to be paid from the proceeds of forfeitures. This expense recovery model will make the program sustainable and reduce the need for Albertans' ongoing fiscal support.

I want to stress that grants will be preserved under this business model. I also want to stress that the victims of crime fund and the funding of victim services units in our communities will not be affected. That is a completely different fund and program. The civil forfeiture program is a relatively new tool to keep Alberta communities safe. When it started, it needed taxpayer financial support. However, the program is now operational and has

demonstrated, Mr. Speaker, that it will be able to recover its expenses and also continue to provide grant funding.

I reinforce that this is only a matter of recovering direct expenses. Proceeds from forfeitures will not go to general government revenues. The fund's current reserves will ensure that we can maintain annual average grant levels as we make this important fund self-sustainable. Regardless of the province's fiscal situation this funding model will allow this successful program to continue its work to reduce crime, help victims' programs, and protect third-party property interests, Mr. Speaker.

Another proposed amendment to the act will prohibit a person's objection to an administrative forfeiture from being used against that person in a criminal trial. The proposed amendment provides a clear commitment that civil forfeiture is not used to undermine the criminal process, Mr. Speaker. Civil forfeiture information has never been used in a criminal case, but this is a proactive provision to allay potential concerns.

4:00

A further amendment to the act will permit regulations listing offences that cause bodily harm or profit. For example, a regulation might be considered in future listing child sexual exploitation as an offence that causes bodily harm. This would mean that property used in committing this type of offence could be subject to civil forfeiture proceedings, Mr. Speaker. This amendment to regulatory authority will not change the program's scope but will open the possibility of increasing clarity and enhancing responsiveness to victims' needs.

The final amendments will be used to pursue technical and minor improvements to business operations. Mr. Speaker, these amendments will help the CFO continue to reduce victimization by producing crime fund programs that support victims. The program enhancements will ensure that the program continues to protect Albertans by taking the profit out of crime and taking away the property needed to commit crime, essentially turning bad money into good money. Albertans deserve and want safe communities. These amendments will help to achieve that.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this is an interesting bill, that deserves some merit and proper scrutiny. You know, I have to say from the outset that it's under a very sort of tight timeline that we are dealing with it. I think we just got briefed on this yesterday, maybe, something like that, so it takes a while for us to go through and make sure that we talk to different people in the community that can help us to understand how any given bill affects the larger society to which it's directed. You know, in the fullness of time I think the Alberta New Democrat team will be able to work through this in a reasonable and constructive way so that we can produce something that will serve the larger society in the best possible way.

This is the way I'm seeing it anyway, that the present Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Act allows for the civil forfeiture office to ask the court, any given court, to restrain, seize, and then, later, forfeit property, okay? An order restraining property prevents it from being sold, like a freeze, basically, until a final ruling about whether it should be returned or disposed of. So the civil forfeiture office has to prove – tell me if I'm right about this – based on a balance of probabilities, that the property, first of all,

was acquired by illegal means or, two, used to carry out an illegal activity that was likely to cause bodily harm or illegal gain, okay?

This bill that we have before us here this afternoon proposes to modernize the legislation surrounding civil forfeiture to enable it to recover expenses from forfeited property and operate on an expense-recovery basis – okay? – somehow bringing this up to date to fully use the money that can be recovered from a forfeiture, which sounds reasonable. The fund is associated with the civil forfeiture office and then would be a regulated type of ongoing fund, I suppose. A person's objection to forfeiture could no longer be used against them in a criminal trial, which seems fair. Concerns for the party in terms of the forfeiture office and language being used in legislation, I think, are something to consider.

It's very important for us to put victims central in the justice system. We all recognize that. Every effort, I think, must be made by government to properly support programs and services for victims, and this is an evolution that, I think, has been a positive one here in this jurisdiction and across the country.

It's very important for the whole process, however, to stay within the legality and the process of one being tried and being found guilty or not and that the handling of the property follows that due process as well. That's the issue or the sticking point that we have to be very careful of because, of course, you know, a person has their property seized before the trial takes place.

We know that in other jurisdictions – this is always the standard thing we do, right? We learn about how it's going in other provinces. We know that in B.C. there has been a civil forfeiture office functioning for a while, and it's been okay, but it's had some problems, too. I think that we should explore those issues before we import something like that here into the province of Alberta. A judge in B.C., for example, found that this civil forfeiture office had taken, in his words, "zealous measures" in a case and ordered the return of confiscated property. It's unclear in our analysis so far whether we are putting in place adequate safeguards to make sure that we are in fact confiscating and selling and distributing property in an equitable way and then making sure that we don't end up creating more legal cases based on legislation that maybe is not comprehensive in that regard.

I think that a broad definition of a peace officer – it's important to have a peace officer definition here that can work for us, right? The definition's potential to empower many people not intended to be empowered by this act is a potential issue that we should look at as well.

Another issue that I think we might want to consider is around section 7 of this bill. A respondent, according to this, now has only 30 days from the time of being served with a restraint order to apply for a review of their order. Previously the respondent had the time to the disposal hearing to apply for a review, so I think it would be prudent and worth while to explore further why we have this 30-day cut-off in this new legislation, and I would just like to explore that a little bit further.

Similarly, in section 8 there is the provision to give the court additional grounds to dismiss an application for review of a restraining order. Under this bill the application may be dismissed if the court is satisfied that "the only ground for a review is a defect in form, a technical irregularity or an inadvertent error or omission, and that no substantial wrong or miscarriage of justice has occurred." Mr. Speaker, I would just like to explore that further in regard to what the implications of that statement are, and, you know, I think it brings to mind what inadvertent mistakes would be now tolerated, that otherwise this bill seeks to change.

I mean, we've been working under tight time restraint here to have some analysis. We want to have time to pursue this further,

like I said, to talk to people outside to find out how the system is working for them now and how this might change.

I think that those are my concerns for now. I also would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that certainly upon a global analysis, a reading of this bill under short time constraints would suggest that Alberta's New Democrats would support this measure in a larger sense, but there are a number of specific issues that I would like to explore further in the various readings of this bill over the fullness of time.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

4:10

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to speak to Bill 23, Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2015. I will note that we were only given a briefing on this bill yesterday, and one would have assumed that if the government had had, I guess, its ducks lined up in a row, we should have seen this bill much earlier on the Order Paper, where we could have had a more fulsome discussion and had time to research more thoroughly and to reach out to stakeholders and the like. We're still working through that process, and we're going forward.

You know, it makes it very difficult for us to do our jobs on this side of the House, to analyze and critique government bills and amendments, when they're put on the Order Paper so late and we're given a briefing yesterday afternoon and expected to fill in the gaps and to be prepared here to come in and thoroughly look at legislation and analyze it and give our open, honest evaluation of it. Nevertheless, we'll try and work through it given those parameters.

What we have here are civil forfeitures, where the Department of Justice, on the recommendation of the police, takes goods and the like when people are accused of crimes under either the federal Criminal Code or the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. That's essentially used then to try to make amends, with that money, to people who have been victimized through the ongoing criminal process. Bill 23 will create a new fund for civil forfeitures, prohibit forfeiture proceedings in court from being used in criminal trials, and have the civil forfeiture office obtain money for operational expenses from the forfeitures themselves.

That's an interesting proposal that, of course, sounds good in practice given that if you can have a self-funding organization, well, then it does relieve the public purse of obligations to fund government operations. It sounds good, but the devil is in the detail. Whether or not we're creating a system that is sustainable, whether it doesn't create conflicts of interest and doesn't provide challenges by our going to the strict model is what we from the Alberta Liberal perspective are questioning. Under Bill 23 the civil forfeiture office will need seizures to survive. The civil forfeiture office will no longer obtain its operational revenue from the Ministry of Justice. Instead, 100 per cent of its operational revenue will be derived from the forfeitures themselves. The government calls this an expense-recovery business model.

Police will be able to seize assets on an interim basis for a maximum of 30 days in the absence of a judge's order. This is up from the current 10. Bill 23 will create a new fund for forfeiture proceeds called the civil forfeiture fund, a shift from the status quo, where proceeds are put into a ministerial trust account. The bill will also prohibit objections against seizures in civil court from being used in criminal court proceedings. The law's name will be renamed the civil forfeiture act from the Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Act, as the hon. minister stated, to avoid confusion as there's another act with a slightly similar mandate that also exists.

You know, concerning the funding model, we question – and we’re trying to get our heads around it; maybe the minister can explain this. We see it as Bill 23 creating a conflict of interest on the part of the civil forfeiture office as they will need to seize property to exist. The only way for a conflict of interest to be eliminated under this funding model is for the Justice ministry to guarantee any shortfalls where the property seized is worth less than the office’s operational expenses. You know, we don’t really want to create a situation where the organization, in order to survive, in order to pay its bills, in order to do the work that they’re mandated to do, have to simply go looking for more assets to seize. That’s essentially what I think we’re creating in this situation, not following through. We’re creating a situation where we may be encouraging the organization to go about things in a fashion that may not be fair and may not be the wisest.

We know – it was noted by the hon. member who spoke before me – that this situation has occurred in British Columbia. It was noted by a judge that that office had become overzealous in pursuing seizures. Although civil forfeiture laws were initially intended to target organized crime, they can also be used, if this model is pursued, to go after some people who may not necessarily be the intended targets of what the government’s purpose of this program was in the first place.

Although the executive director of the civil forfeiture office does not anticipate that this model will reduce any grant payments from the fund despite the office’s plan that it will need to raise a minimum amount to ensure that grants can be paid and that enough money does exist to keep the operations going, that is a concern to us. We see it as a conflict of interest. If there is something in the bill that states that the Justice ministry will cover those ongoing concerns and keep it operating as a government entity should there be a shortfall, I think that would be a solution to what we see as a conflict of interest, or the minister could possibly explain as to why we missed the boat on that. Like I said, since we just got it yesterday, there is always that possibility. So I look forward to the minister clarifying that.

You know, this will create a broad-reaching organization. We have to make sure the proper oversight and proper limits are in place to ensure that the act is doing what it’s intended to do and not creating a situation where they act in a fashion that may not be in the best interests of the Alberta people.

In any event, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Those are my comments, and we’ll go forward from there.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak on Bill 23, Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2015?

Seeing none, I’ll ask the hon. Minister of Energy to close the debate.

**Mr. Oberle:** On behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General I now ask that we call the question, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I’d like to call the committee to order.

4:20

### Bill 23 Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2015

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Again, you know, like I said, just because we got the legislation yesterday, we are working with stakeholders and so forth to maybe potentially have a couple of amendments here and there, but it’s very difficult for us to actually generate all that in a short period of time.

Like I said from the outset, Madam Chair, this bill globally is something that Alberta New Democrats can agree with. Specifically, I think we just have to be really careful. I know that in other places where they have expanded the forfeiture and seizure of property from the avails of crime, we could say, you run into that roadblock between the due process of finding someone guilty or not and then trying to sort out the property that that individual or individuals might have in their possession and how it all fits into the case. You know, that is a difficult but necessary job. We know that we want to have justice for victims as a central part of our justice system, but you want to make sure that you are doing that in a just and fair manner.

I know, from just looking at the next province over here, B.C., they’ve had some problems with that. It’s not insurmountable, but I think that the responsibility lies with us to ensure that we are building a bill that doesn’t end up creating more activity in the courts in regard to property and so forth. Of course, we want to dispense justice, but we also want to make sure that the court system is functioning properly and fluidly.

I’m just looking at this bill in terms of a line-by-line analysis. Right? Section 1 amends the name of the act, which is pretty straightforward, Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Act, replacing it with civil forfeiture and restitution act. I mean, that gives us a flavour of what’s to come, I guess, Madam Chair.

Then, of course, in the definitions you have “the fund,” which refers to the civil forfeiture fund that we’re presumably creating, and “peace officer,” which may refer to

any other person employed by a public entity, a municipality or the Government of Canada for the preservation and maintenance of the public peace, while the person is in the exercise or discharge of the person’s powers and duties.

The breadth of that definition, Madam Chair, as I had said in my comments not long ago in second reading, is, I think, a cause for some concern, just the breadth of deputizing people as a peace officer in the broadest possible way.

Also in the definitions the definition of a property victim is added. That’s fairly straightforward: a person who’s “been deprived of property by reason of [the] illegal act” that’s been carried out by another person. Fair enough. I guess that where we need clarification is in regard to what the definition of a property victim actually is. Okay? I mean, in some cases it becomes patently obvious, but in other circumstances it could be not so much. So I think that that’s worth pursuing here to some degree.

Section 7 is where we see another significant amendment, and that is the restriction that a respondent has 30 days to apply for a review of a restraint order. As I said before, we’re just wondering about the arbitrary nature of this time. Maybe it doesn’t quite fit in with court proceedings so that, you know, the court case has not really moved that much, but still you only have 30 days to appeal. It’s almost like you have two sort of parallel judgment things

happening at the same time, but one has a 30-day limit while the other one could go on for many, many months.

Section 8 is amended as well with this new bill by the addition of this piece here, which says that the Court may dismiss an application for a review of the restraint order if the Court is satisfied that

- (a.1) the only ground for a review is a defect in form, a technical irregularity or an inadvertent error or omission, and that no substantial wrong or miscarriage of justice has occurred.

Our concern with that provisionally is that the addition of that last part, that I just read, might limit the legal recourse available to those for whom the confiscation of the property is a somehow disproportionate sanction or where doubts exist as to whether or not the property was the proceeds of crime – okay? – so kind of where you draw the line with the property that an accused might own.

The other part, 3.1, is added on, and that's on the civil forfeiture fund itself. This is a regulated fund, as far as I can see, receiving, among other things,

- (a) proceeds from property forfeited to the Crown . . .
- (c) proceeds paid to the Crown from the disposal of property . . .
- (d) money appropriated by the Legislature for the purposes of the Fund;

So we would be starting this fund, I suppose.

- (e) advances from the General Revenue Fund for the purposes of the Fund;
- (f) money received as repayment of any amount paid by the Minister from the Fund;

Finally,

- (g) amounts paid to the Court, the Minister or the Fund in compliance with a court order or pursuant to a settlement of a legal action, or relating to administrative disposition proceedings.

Okay. That's a significant part of this bill as well, the function and creation of the fund.

Section 55 is permitting the cabinet to make regulations on this whole procedure, which is, I think, fairly straightforward. Then it also designates illegal acts as specified property acquisition offences and designates illegal acts as specified bodily harm offences as well. That's fair enough, I think. But we just should probably take note that this provision in the bill might effectively curtail debate as to whether designated illegal acts were indeed property acquisition or bodily harm offences. You know, it just kind of mixes things together, in our minds, so we have that concern as well.

Those are the issues that I have up to this point, Madam Chair, because, of course, we are in a dynamic of time and space and intellect, and where those intersect – we just don't have enough of it right now. If other hon. members can help us with the proper analysis of this bill, that would be great, and away we go.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

4:30

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be quite brief here. I do note that the Alberta Liberals will be bringing in an amendment, hopefully, that we believe will eliminate some of the conflicts of interest which may arise out of making the civil forfeiture office fully, 100 per cent, responsible for its operational revenue as it will be derived from the forfeitures themselves. Obviously, what the government is calling it is an expense recovery business, which, like I said in earlier debate, is probably what we would like in a perfect world. But it also could drive certain behaviours that may not be in the best interests of the Alberta public.

That amendment, being brought forward by our critic for this area, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, will be forthcoming. It's

my understanding that we are working on it as we speak given what was already stated, that we got a bill briefing on late yesterday afternoon. Frankly, we're in the dying days of a session. I'm still perplexed by the fact that this bill wasn't on the Order Paper a couple of weeks ago, frankly, to have us be able to consult, to do our work, to explore whether or not this is working because we do have a case where we should look at other jurisdictions that have gone down this path, that have civil forfeiture offices working and operating, and look at the best practices of those institutions going forward.

As I noted earlier in debate, there has been some commentary out of the justice system in British Columbia that states that having a self-funding organization based on the forfeitures they make has led to the commentary that that office has acted in an overzealous fashion. This can create difficulties for our citizenry if they have property confiscated and, in fact, whether they have the opportunity to get legal consultation to be able to appear before a magistrate or a judge to explain their case and to get their ducks in a row. Well, my goodness. We don't want to have overreach by our civil forfeiture office that would impinge on our civil liberties and wouldn't ensure a fair playing field for those involved in the criminal justice system.

So those are concerns, the apparent conflicts of interest that could be eliminated. If the Justice ministry were to guarantee any shortfalls where property seized was worth less than the office's operational expenses, that may be a fix to this conundrum that would actually allow it to move forward in a better fashion, where the organization wasn't compelled to not act in accordance with the spirit of the legislation or the purpose and the like. So we'd like to bring that intention forward and the careful scrutiny to this bill that I am certain the Member for Edmonton-Centre will bring forward in that.

I do note that there are some changes here that are being contemplated that affect the citizenry and affect the way this bill will work in some form and fashion going forward.

Madam Chair, I do have an amendment in front of me that I would like to pass out. I note the hon. Justice minister was just here, so I'm hoping that he can maybe shed some light on this amendment and that we can go forward and he can understand it and decipher it and give his commentary as to what his thoughts are on it, the reason, the rationale, and, hopefully, how . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, before we carry on and discuss the amendment, we'll take a moment to pass it out to everybody.

**Mr. Hehr:** That sounds wonderful.

**The Deputy Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.

Thank you, hon. member. You may proceed with amendment A1 on Bill 23.

**Mr. Hehr:** Okay. This is brought on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman to move that Bill 23, Victims Restitution and Compensation Amendment Act, 2015, be amended in section 38, in the proposed section 45.2(d), by striking out subclause (vii).

We feel that this amendment will bring some clarity to the bill, will allow for a more seamless administration of justice, and will allow the bill to proceed with more of a sense of fair play and spirit that is meant to bring some more focus to what the purpose of the Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2015, should look like. We believe it will create fewer conflicts of interest and allow the organization to proceed in a fashion that will allow it to do its good work without causing it to overreach or to act

in an overzealous fashion and would allow for the department to be more effective in the way it delivers and goes about its business.

I know the hon. Justice minister is here, so I'm certain he will have some comments on this amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. I'm sure that he will see the wisdom in what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is proposing and duly enter it into the books. Like I said, we've been working very hard, with short timelines, to try and get our amendments in order and to understand the bill and the purpose and scope, and we think this amendment will go a long way to making the bill a stronger bill for the people of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Denis:** Just before I continue, I wanted to thank this member for his service to the Assembly. I remember the day when you and I had a trial opposite each other, Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*. I've always enjoyed your commentary. Thank you for your service the last seven years.

And, Madam Chair, thank you for your service the last 14 years.

I rise to speak against this amendment. What this would in effect do is that it would remove a section on page 26 of Bill 23:

- (vii) payment of the expenses directly associated with the administration of those Parts of this Act by the office, agency or branch of the Government responsible for administering those Parts of this Act.

Now, one of the piths and the substance of this bill is that we want to move to a self-funding model as exists for the civil forfeiture office in other major provinces. What's happening right now: the civil forfeiture office is doing good work, but at the same time the taxpayers are de facto subsidizing the civil forfeiture office. Of course, that does result in positive things, bad money helping good organizations throughout the last six to seven years that this has been operating.

One of the major tenets of this bill, Madam Chair, is that this office should not be subsidized by the taxpayer. I have yet to hear a good argument against this. With no disrespect to my friend from Calgary-*Buffalo* and his always congenial friend from Edmonton-Centre, I have to oppose this amendment, and I would encourage all members to vote it down.

Thank you.

4:40

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-*Calder*.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Madam Chair. Certainly, this is an interesting development. Again, we're dealing with very short, compressed timelines, and it's meant to be educative as well. As I read through the first part of the analysis of the setting up of this fund, it seemed clear that we'd take monies from general revenues to establish the fund in the first place. That's public money. Then, of course, this whole thing is going through the court system, which is a public entity.

The separate fund is what I'm curious about, then. Sure, it's great to have the idea that it is self-sustaining or self-funding – I mean, that's an idea that I think is worthy to pursue – but if it's not, certainly we need to have a provision for it to still carry on and still function. I'm asking the minister and House leader if subsection (vii) there, that we're debating whether we should eliminate or not – that does not preclude the possibility of still having to fund this restitution process using public funds if there's not enough seizure money and/or property to run the show. Am I getting that correctly?

**Mr. Denis:** I would respectfully defer – and I would also thank you for your service in the last three years and the four years before that.

Without this section my understanding is, again, that we're moving away from a self-funding model. The part of this legislation that is very important is the fact that we want to move away from taxpayers subsidizing this office. My understanding, my read of this bill is that if we pass amendment A1, from the Member for Edmonton-Centre, as the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* has indicated, we would move away from that model, and you'd have basically a situation where the taxpayers are indirectly subsidizing this office through the cost of the many hard-working people of the Alberta public service.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, now that I've heard the commentary going back and forth, I agree with the minister on the goal of a self-funding organization, okay? If a government body who is existing, the civil forfeiture, under this method can self-fund, great. Cool bananas. That is good in my books, and frankly it's responsible for it to do so if that is operationally possible. What we don't want to find and what this amendment addresses are cases where the civil forfeiture office maybe has a dry year, shall we say. The citizens of Alberta are no longer wanting to be involved in crime, have given it up as a means of pursuing their livelihoods, and just simply put, it finds itself having a difficult time making payroll, paying the people on staff to be able to do so – okay? – which is maybe a stretch but nonetheless a possibility out there. Well, you know, you can imagine a host of circumstances. We have seen how in other organizations, other provinces there has been commentary from the bench that says that these organizations in B.C. have become overzealous in their approach, okay?

What this amendment would do – obviously, it wouldn't take away from the goal or from the Justice minister saying to this organization: "Look here. You guys are primarily on your own. Don't expect any money from us. There's no money in the budget for anything of that nature." But if it comes down to the end of the year and this organization has \$50,000 outstanding and they're going to miss payroll: well, my goodness, we better get another forfeiture out there. Or is it better just to have the ministry cover that? We think that having that provision in place wouldn't undercut what the Justice minister is trying to do to have this organization be self-sustaining but would allow the provision where that conflict doesn't occur that the organization has to justify its means by going out there and overreaching, being overbroad and overzealous in their approach.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Denis:** The last comment that I will make on this is that, unfortunately, we've never had a situation where there isn't enough money in the reserve fund in the civil forfeiture office. Somebody asked me: what about drugs? Well, unfortunately, illegal drugs are a major aspect dealing with this office, the items that they seize. That's going to be around for a while, unfortunately. That's just the reality. I hope that the member, though, is right and proves me wrong, that all the crime stops next year in Alberta. Unfortunately, I don't think that's going to happen.

I also want to mention and credit the Minister of Energy, who's whispered over to me that, of course, this is why we have a reserve fund. We don't pay out all of the money that we get in any given year. You keep a reserve fund to keep this operating. The purpose of this is to take a financial bite out of crime. The purpose is not to

seize legitimate people's property; the purpose is to take a bite out of the financial aspects of crime.

I also lastly just want to mention that the government of Ontario has an almost identical process whereby the office is self-funded and has not encountered any of the issues that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo posits.

That'll be my final comment on this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Any other members wish to comment on amendment A1?

Seeing none, we will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will go back to debating Bill 23 in Committee of the Whole. Are there any members who wish to comment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 23 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

**Mr. Oberle:** Madam Chair, I would move at this time that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

**Mr. Dallas:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 23. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

**Mr. Denis:** I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the Assembly to proceed with third reading of Bill 23 today.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**Mr. Oberle:** Madam Speaker, in light of that and in light of considerable progress made today, I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

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

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