



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday, May 28, 2012

Issue 3

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First 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 (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)  
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)  
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),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)  
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)  
Cusanelli, Hon. Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)  
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)  
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)  
Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND),  
New Democrat Opposition Whip  
Fawcett, Hon. Kyle, Calgary-Klein (PC)  
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)  
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W)  
Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)  
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)  
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)  
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),  
Government House Leader  
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)  
Horne, Hon. Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)  
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-St. Albert (PC)  
Hughes, Hon. Ken, Calgary-West (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, Calgary-Varsity (PC)  
Khan, Hon. Stephen, St. Albert (PC)  
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)  
Kubinec, Maureen, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (PC)  
Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)  
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)  
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)  
Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)  
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Leader of the New Democrat Opposition  
McAllister, Bruce, Chestermere-Rocky View (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
McQueen, Hon. Diana, Drayton Valley-Devon (PC)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
New Democrat Opposition House Leader  
Oberle, Hon. Frank, Peace River (PC)  
Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)  
Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)  
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)  
Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)  
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)  
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)  
Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),  
Premier  
Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)  
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)  
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)  
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Scott, Hon. Donald, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (PC)  
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL),  
Leader of the Liberal Opposition  
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
VanderBurg, Hon. George, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (PC)  
Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)  
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)  
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),  
Government Whip

### Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

W.J. David McNeil, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Committee Research Co-ordinator	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Liz Sim, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

## **Executive Council**

Alison Redford	Premier, President of Executive Council
Thomas Lukaszuk	Deputy Premier
Manmeet Singh Bhullar	Minister of Service Alberta
Robin Campbell	Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Christine Cusanelli	Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Cal Dallas	Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations
Jonathan Denis	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Wayne Drysdale	Minister of Infrastructure
Kyle Fawcett	Associate Minister of Finance
Doug Griffiths	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dave Hancock	Minister of Human Services
Fred Horne	Minister of Health
Doug Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Ken Hughes	Minister of Energy
Jeff Johnson	Minister of Education
Stephen Khan	Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Culture
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Diana McQueen	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Frank Oberle	Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities
Verlyn Olson	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Dave Rodney	Associate Minister of Wellness
Donald Scott	Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation
George VanderBurg	Associate Minister of Seniors
Greg Weadick	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs
Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations

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

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

Chair: Mr. Amery  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Bikman

Bhardwaj	Quadri
Blakeman	Quest
Donovan	Rogers
Dorward	Sandhu
Eggen	Sherman
Fenske	Smith
Goudreau	Starke
Hehr	Strankman
Jansen	Towle
Luan	Young
McDonald	Vacant
Olesen	

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

Chair: Mr. Quest  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Anderson  
Casey  
Dorward  
Eggen  
Kubinec  
Sandhu  
Sherman

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Pastoor  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

Allen	Leskiw
DeLong	Luan
Fox	McAllister
Fraser	Notley
Fritz	Pedersen
Jablonski	Sarich
Jansen	Saskiw
Jeneroux	Swann
Johnson, L.	Wilson
Kang	Young
Kubinec	Vacant
Lemke	

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Xiao  
Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman  
Blakeman  
Brown  
DeLong  
Eggen  
Leskiw  
Quadri  
Rogers  
Wilson

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Young

Calahasen  
Dorward  
Forsyth  
Goudreau  
Jablonski  
Mason  
Quest  
Sherman  
Smith

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Cao  
Deputy Chair: Ms L. Johnson

Barnes	Notley
Bhardwaj	Olesen
Brown	Pastoor
DeLong	Rowe
Fox	Sarich
Fritz	Starke
Goudreau	Strankman
Jeneroux	Swann
Kennedy-Glans	Webber
Luan	

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

Chair: Dr. Starke  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Lemke

Allen	McAllister
Amery	McDonald
Bhardwaj	Notley
Casey	Pedersen
Hehr	Sandhu
Jansen	Saskiw
Jeneroux	Towle
Johnson, L.	Xiao
Kennedy-Glans	Young
Kubinec	

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Anderson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

Allen	Hale
Amery	Hehr
Anglin	Kang
Bilous	Pastoor
Calahasen	Quadri
DeLong	Sarich
Donovan	Starke
Fenske	Stier
Fraser	Webber
Fritz	

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Ms Kennedy-Glans  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowe

Anderson	Hehr
Anglin	Johnson, L.
Barnes	Kubinec
Bilous	Lemke
Blakeman	Leskiw
Brown	Sandhu
Calahasen	Stier
Cao	Webber
Casey	Xiao
Fenske	Young
Fraser	Vacant
Hale	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 28, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would just remind you to please remain standing after the prayer for the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, at the beginning of this week we ask for renewed strength in the awareness of our duty and privilege as Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly. We ask for the protection of this Assembly and also for the province we are honoured and elected to serve. Amen.

#### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much, members and Mr. Lorieau. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Rob Ladouceur and his daughter Natasha. Natasha is currently a grade 2 student at G.P. Vanier school in Morinville. Rob, who was born and raised in Fort McMurray, now lives in Morinville. Rob works in the oil and gas sector and is also the Wildrose Party vice-president of policy. I would now ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour for me to stand and introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly 11 students and staff from Delta West Academy in Calgary-Mountain View. With them are Amanda Dennis and Boris Portero, their teachers. Please stand, and we'll give you a warm welcome from the Legislature.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 43 visitors from Jasper elementary school in my home town of Jasper in Jasper national park. Accompanying the students are two teachers, Mrs. Connie Sawka and Mme Judith Desmeules; parents Mrs. Angelika Zaniol, Ms Sue Nelson, and Mr. Kent Horsman. They are in the public members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the Falun Dafa associations of Calgary and Edmonton, who are here today to seek an answer from the Alberta government for the recent cancellations of the Shen Yun performances at the Jubilee auditoriums in both Calgary and Edmonton. I would ask Zhiqiug Yang, Beichen Sun, Chunyan Huang, Minnan Liu, Jenny Yang, and Shar Chen to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce two individuals that have been very strong supporters, workers, and volunteers. Today one of them is joining my team here in the Legislative Assembly. First, I'd like to introduce Balraj Singh "Bobby/Kramer" Randhawa. If Bobby could please rise. In addition, I have Suman Hoonjan, who is joining the Legislative Assembly as my summer intern. I'd ask both of them to rise, and I'd ask my colleagues to give them a warm welcome.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Vaw Pisut. Vaw is a 16-year-old grade 10 student from Chiang Mai, Thailand, here on a one-year exchange program with Rotary International youth. He arrived in Canada last August speaking only a handful of words and is now enrolled at Notre Dame high school in Calgary. Back home in Thailand Vaw was a member of a competitive marching band. While in Canada he has become an accomplished chef and hopes to attend culinary school once he graduates high school. Since arriving in Calgary, Vaw has had four host families and will experience the centennial Calgary Stampede in July before returning home to his family in Thailand later next month. Joining Vaw is someone who is special in my life, my husband, Gord. I'll ask them both to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly five representatives from the primary care network Edmonton North, located in the constituency of Edmonton-Decore. The primary care network Edmonton North is celebrating their fifth anniversary on June 1, 2012. Today I have five guests seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to please rise as I mention their names. We have with us today Dr. Mary Turner, president of the board of directors; Ms Leanne McGeachy, general manager; Ms Carly Strong, executive assistant; Ms Lindsay Steward, physician administrative services manager; and Ms Chantal Norris, office manager. I want to take this opportunity to thank them and all the physicians and allied health professionals at the primary care network Edmonton North for their dedicated service and contribution to our health care system. I would now ask the Legislative Assembly to please give them the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of students and teachers from George P. Nicholson school, located in the new constituency of Edmonton-South West, that I'm honoured to

serve. Accompanying these 24 bright and energetic students are teacher Mrs. Maxine Sprague and educational assistant Mrs. Terry Katerenchuk. They are excited to be here. Since I've been an MLA, this is already their second visit. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that all students and guests from George P. Nicholson school rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 15 students from Lakeview Christian school in Stettler. They have travelled a long way to get here, and we are pleased and proud to have them here to witness democracy in action, something which is near and dear to my heart. With that, I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly four guests who are members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and part of the work action at the Hardisty Care Centre in Edmonton. Nearly 100 licensed practical nurses and health care aides have been on strike for a week now. These hard-working individuals are looking for a fair deal from their employer, Park Place Seniors Living, who has been paying wages 30 per cent lower than Alberta Health Services pays for the same work despite receiving large subsidies from this government. Alberta's NDP is proud to stand with these workers in their struggle for fairness. I would now ask my guests to rise as I call their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly: Mark Wells, Lorraine McCallum, Surinder Virdee, and Gagan Brar.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Sherwood Park, do you have some guests to introduce?

**Ms Olesen:** Yes, I do. Thank you. It is my honour, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House my husband, Rex Adam, and Bill and Erma Chow. I don't know if they've been able to make it, but they were scheduled to come. They are friends of mine from Sherwood Park, loyal supporters of all things democratic and good and are great volunteers in our community. Please, let's give them a welcome.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly one of my constituents, Sonia Varela. Sonia was born in Spain and moved to Canada in 1974. She now works as an early learning supervisor and has volunteered with the food bank for over 10 years. Sonia follows Alberta politics very, very closely and can often be seen observing the proceedings here in this gallery. I would now ask Sonia to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a young man from my constituency, Tyson Phillips. Tyson grew up near Beauvallon and is a recent graduate from the Canadian University

College in Lacombe, completing his bachelor of science degree in biology with a biomedical specialty in only three and a half years. Tyson is pursuing a career in medicine and is currently studying for the medical college admissions test. He was my deputy campaign manager in the last election. I know he has a very bright future in this province. I'd invite him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

## Statements by the Speaker

### Decorum and Civility in the Chamber Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'd like to take three minutes, actually, before we begin the rest of our daily Routine. On April 23, 2012, 87 of us were given a very special and a very rare honour, to serve as MLAs in this Assembly. Thirty-eight of you are brand new members and have been given that honour for the first time. I will remind you again that since 1905 only 829 Albertans have been given this honour. History will show that many of those MLAs were honoured again and yet again in their subsequent bids for re-election while others were not, and it causes one to wonder why.

Therefore, if you feel like I do, that it truly is an honour to serve in this Assembly, and I'm sure you all do, and that we all ought to respect that honour through our words and actions – and I'm sure you all do – then I would ask you to consider developing a personal credo. The word “credo,” as you will know, comes from the Latin language, and it means a system of beliefs and principles. It's a credo that I hope will serve you as your personal guide, your statement of commitment to yourself, as it were, to your colleagues, to your constituents, and to this Assembly.

I ask you to do this in order to help establish a new atmosphere in this Chamber, one that is respectful of each other, of our parliamentary traditions, and of our standing orders. We are all very aware of the numerous letters, e-mails, and phone calls that pour into the Speaker's office when members misbehave, use unparliamentary language, rudely interrupt each other, deliver speeches that are nothing more than character assassinations, and the list goes on. Your Speaker believes we can, we must, and we will do better.

So I ask you to construct your own personal credo so that it becomes your written conscience and reflects who you are and, perhaps even more importantly, how you want others to see you. For example, the letter “c” in your credo could stand for civility. The letter “r” could stand for respect. The letter “e” could stand for equality, the letter “d” for decorum, and the letter “o” for openness. I know that each of you is very creative and that you could come up with your own c-r-e-d-o. I invite you to do that, please. Your credo will symbolize the mark you wish to make in this Assembly. Please create it and refer to it before you speak and act in this Assembly, and try not to be swayed by external influences that would have you stray from your own personal credo.

Hon. members, it's time to clean up our act in this Assembly. It's also time to show Albertans that they have elected representatives in this Assembly who are truly worthy of the honour that has been bestowed upon each one of us. The opportunity is now, and it has been placed in your hands.

In closing, I can assure you that as your Speaker I fully understand and I fully support freedom of speech and that I am prepared to offer and afford considerable leeway in this regard. I can also assure you that as your Speaker I will not be very tolerant of words and actions that violate the long-standing decency and

decorum with which this Assembly was first established over 100 years ago.

Thank you for your attention and, hopefully, also for your anticipated co-operation in this regard.

Hon. members, before we carry on with Members' Statements, it's important for me to outline the rotation that will apply for Oral Question Period and for Members' Statements. Late Friday afternoon the Speaker's office received a document signed by all four House leaders on the rotation of oral questions and of members' statements. At the appropriate time in the Routine I would invite the Government House Leader to table that document. I will ensure that the rotation outlined in that document is then distributed to all members.

Meanwhile I want to state that the contents of that document, which I have accepted as an agreement to proceed, will be an agreement for the benefit of everyone following these proceedings and for the permanent record of this Assembly.

Flowing from the agreement, the Official Opposition is entitled to the first three main questions each day. The Liberal caucus is entitled to the fourth question and the NDP caucus to the fifth. The Official Opposition is entitled to the sixth, and private government members are entitled to the seventh question. The Official Opposition is entitled to ask the eighth, 12th, 14th, and 16th questions.

On days 1 and 3 in the Assembly schedule the Official Opposition is entitled to ask the 18th question. Should Oral Question Period proceed that far, the Official Opposition will be entitled to ask the 20th and 21st questions. In the past few years about 18 or 19 sets of questions have typically been asked each day.

After the fourth question each day the third-party Liberal caucus will be entitled to the 10th question. On day 4 in the schedule the Liberal caucus will be entitled to the 18th question. As indicated, the NDP caucus will be entitled to the fifth question and to the 11th question each day. After the seventh question each day government members will be entitled to the ninth, 13th, 15th, 17th, 19th, and, should we get there, the 22nd question. On day 2 government members will be entitled to the 18th question as well.

**1:50**

With respect to Member's Statements the rotation differs from the one that my office sent out on Thursday, May 24, 2012, as the House leaders' agreement arrived late on Friday afternoon, May 25. Under the agreement government members will be entitled to four statements on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday and three statements on Wednesday. The Official Opposition will be entitled to two members' statements on Tuesday and Wednesday and one on Monday and Thursday. The third-party Liberals will be entitled to one statement on Monday and Thursday, and one member of the NDP caucus will have the opportunity to make a statement each Wednesday. Under the agreement the NDP caucus is entitled to an additional member's statement every third week. The Liberal caucus has one fewer member's statement every fourth week. Adjustments will be made to the number of government members' statements accordingly.

I want to briefly comment on the conduct of Oral Question Period. Members asking a question will be entitled to a main question and two supplementary questions. There should not be preambles to the supplementary questions. However, in keeping with the practice of the last Legislature questions and answers should be no longer than 35 seconds each. The chair will enforce this time to enable the maximum number of members possible to participate in question period. In keeping with the level of civility and decorum that I referenced earlier, it would be helpful if answers to questions were responsive.

With respect to Members' Statements I want members to know that they will continue to enjoy great leeway when it comes to this item of business. Members' Statements provide an opportunity in the daily Routine for members to recognize people, organizations, or events in their constituencies and for those words to be recorded in *Hansard*. It is also a time for members to comment on whatever issues they choose. However, it will not be an occasion for members to engage in unparliamentary language or to disparage other members, as I indicated earlier. I was a member in 1993 when this item of business was introduced into the daily Routine, and it was never the intention to have members make derogatory allegations against other members.

Thank you.

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Nonrenewable Resource Revenues

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Premier my congratulations on winning a hard-fought election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, based on today's declining oil price, this government has a \$2 billion hole in its budget. Even with the rosy projection of \$99 oil the cash deficit was \$3 billion. With today's WTI price at \$91 that deficit will be \$5 billion. Last week CIBC said that oil prices will decline for another three months and will, quote, ultimately bottom in the mid-\$80s. Wildrose stands for fiscal accountability. To the Premier: how will she get out of this new \$2 billion budget hole? By increasing the deficit, raising taxes, or wiping out what's left of our savings?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome the Leader of the Official Opposition to the House and all new members that are in the House today.

The wonderful thing that we've been able to do and what we proved to Albertans on April 23 is that a Progressive Conservative government can put forward a bold plan that is fiscally responsible, with no tax increases, no new taxes, and continue to provide services to Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Our projections are entirely consistent with what's happening right now in the international economy. In fact, the average that we projected was \$99.25, and the average as of today is \$99. So we're confident in our plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that the Calgary Chamber of Commerce said when Budget 2012 was tabled that Alberta "relies too heavily on volatile royalty revenue," what is her plan to end Alberta's reliance on these kinds of revenues and secure long-term prosperity for future generations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of what the Premier talked about, our plan is stable, and we are on track currently. In terms of diversifying the economy, we will make investments in areas of the province where we know we can grow our tax base, and that will generate additional tax base and reduce our reliance on nonrenewable resources.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that these numbers don't even factor in the expensive promises that she made during the election campaign, how does she anticipate being able to manage the budget quagmire while delivering on the promises that Albertans elected her to keep?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, as we've said many, many times in this House and during the campaign, we presented Albertans with a fiscal plan and a plan to invest for the future of this province, which, I must say, on April 23 they seem to have approved of because we are here on the government side.

In addition to that, we have a budgetary process that we're monitoring. Many of the campaign commitments that we've made are already included in our budget process, and those things that were not will be included in the budget process because they were announced after the period of time when we delivered it in this House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. opposition leader for the second main question.

#### Alberta Office in Ottawa

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week's throne speech promised yet another Alberta embassy office although this time it's in our own country. At the cost of nearly \$1 million it creates a role that clearly duplicates that which should be currently performed by members of the Premier's own government and federally elected members. To the Premier: given that other provinces are dispensing with their Ottawa offices, how can the Premier justify this unnecessary expense when we have our own deficit issues?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the work that we've been able to do in the past six months in partnership with the federal government, and we've had tremendous success with respect to environmental management and ensuring that Canadians and people around the world understand the story of Alberta. It's important not only for our own economy but for the economy of Canada.

We had a wonderful conversation last week with the Prime Minister's office, certainly agreed that it was important for Alberta to have an office in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. We have an international diplomatic corps there. We have the opportunity to work continually with our caucuses across the country and to ensure that our ministers do travel back and forth. This will add to our strength in Canada.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition leader.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that there are so many senior MPs, including the Prime Minister himself, that represent constituencies in Alberta, why does the Premier feel that she and her intergovernmental minister's office are not able to work directly with the federal government?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my first answer, it's very clear that the issues that we need to manage on behalf of Alberta matter to Canada's economy, and they matter to caucuses from provinces across this country, and they matter in terms of us being able to provide support to our federal colleagues. You know, we probably in the last six months have had at least three cabinet ministers in Ottawa every month. One of the best parts of the

conversation has been to be able to hear from our federal colleagues that represent Alberta about how important strengthening their ability to do research and advance arguments on behalf of Alberta is, and that's what this office will do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition leader.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given her insistence on proceeding with this appointment, will she then at least break with past practices and commit to holding a fair, open, and transparent competition for Alberta's Ottawa office?

**Mr. Dallas:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has clearly indicated that we will engage an executive search firm to search for suitable candidates for at least the senior official position and populate the office with three employees in total. Certainly, that will be transparent.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Official Opposition leader for the third main question.

#### Cancellation of Jubilee Auditoria Performances

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the election Albertans saw this government's true colours: bullying and intimidating municipal councillors, school boards, and even everyday Albertans simply because they spoke out against government policy. Albertans hoped that the election would result in a different tone, but just one week after the election the Culture minister abruptly cancelled the popular annual performance of Chinese music and dance called Shen Yun after the group publicly raised concerns about the management at the Jubilee Auditorium. The Premier says her government is different, but these are the same old PC strong-arm tactics. What is she going to do to fix this situation?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm honoured to have the group in attendance in the Chamber.

I do want to say that at the beginning, when this began, it was a contractual issue between the Jubilee auditoriums and the performers. For me it's about the conversation of the performers, how they perform, and I've asked my officials and my assistant deputy minister to meet with them as well.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that just days after the election she told the *Edmonton Journal* that "it's going to be big change" when talking about her government and given that this most recent example of bullying came, ironically, just one day before those words appeared in print, can the Premier explain to this House how axing these annual performances counts as big change?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, you know, what would be really nice to see in terms of change is actually talking about the issues of the day in this House, but if we're not going to do that, what I will say, as our minister has already said, is that this is a safety issue. This is an issue with respect to whether or not netting should be up around a stage, and the management of the auditoriums believe that to be the case. We will always be concerned about the safety of audiences and the safety of performers. That is our primary

concern, and it is the only reason that this issue is going on. There's a contractual dispute.

2:00

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition leader.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given her repeated promises to do things differently, will she instruct her Culture minister to resolve this issue, or is she telling this Assembly that she stands behind her minister's decision?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has already said that she has taken steps to see if this issue can be resolved, but it is not appropriate to make that sort of commitment in this House. This is a contractual issue that has to do with safety. If those issues are not resolved, then we will have an unfortunate situation, but the safety of performers and the safety of audiences will be paramount.

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

### Alberta Health Services Quarterly Report

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations on your selection.

Mr. Speaker, this government deliberately delayed the AHS March report until after the election, and it's easy to see why: heart bypass surgery wait times, fail; hip and knee replacement surgery wait times, fail; radiation therapy access, fail; placing our vulnerable in continuing care beds, fail; physician and staff engagement, fail; patients admitted from ER within eight hours, fail. To the Premier: how can you possibly justify keeping this important information from Albertans on the eve of an election?

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is absolutely untrue to suggest that any information was withheld from Albertans. Alberta Health Services produced its quarterly performance report in accordance with its normal schedule. We had just introduced a budget in this House, and at my request I took the opportunity to sit down with Alberta Health Services to talk about their performance over the last three months and, more importantly, talk about how new resources offered in Budget 2012 might be offered to supplement that performance.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this was a March quarterly report, not a May quarterly report, again, Madam Premier, do you honestly believe that intentionally delaying the March report until May, until after the election, does not call the integrity of AHS and your integrity into question?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing – and it is the same old same old – that we would hear the hon. member suggest, first of all, that the report was delayed for political reasons and, secondly, by his earlier examples, that Alberta's health system is somehow a failure. In fact, I can tell you that in a report released last week by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Alberta enjoys the lowest in-hospital mortality rates, the lowest rates of hospital readmission for heart attacks, the second-best rate for heart attack surgery access in Canada, the second-best wait times in the country for hip fracture surgery, within 48 hours, and the lowest rate in the country of self-reported chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we spend \$16 billion a year, Albertans expect more.

Given that the Premier talks so much about results-based budgeting, yet at the same time you choose as your Energy minister the very man who led AHS to these abysmal results, I can't help but wonder, Madam Premier: will you be budgeting based on good results or poor results?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, what this government talked about during the election campaign and what we will continue to be committed to is achieving the best possible value that we can from taxpayer dollars spent on health care.

I'm sure it is very illuminating to members and, more importantly, to employees of Alberta Health Services, who work so diligently to deliver health care of the highest quality, to know that the hon. member believes their work is in vain and is a failure. This government does not believe that. We enjoy one of the best health care systems in the country. We will continue to work to improve it in targeted areas that we talked about during the election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Child Poverty

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During the recent election the Premier promised a plan to end child poverty in Alberta. This is a noble goal and a very ambitious undertaking, yet there is no mention at all of this plan in the Speech from the Throne, which we heard last week. My question is to the Premier. Why not?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, this is a priority for our government. It's a priority for our Minister of Human Services. In fact, some of this work has already begun. The work that our minister has been doing in consultation with Albertans around the social policy framework will be an important component of this. It's not the only component, but it is critical.

The second piece, of course, is that what we want to see with respect to ending child poverty is very much what we have been able to accomplish as a government with respect to the 10-year plan to end homelessness. Those consultations are ongoing, Mr. Speaker, and we are committed to that.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given the unlikelyhood that a Tory government actually wants to do something to reduce poverty and given that such a major undertaking should have been prominently featured in the government's Speech from the Throne, will the Premier admit that the elimination of child poverty is not really anything more than a hollow election promise?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The social policy framework and the commitment to end child poverty in five years and to have a plan to reduce poverty in this province over 10 years is very much part and parcel of the mandate of Human Services. I've been tasked with this since prior to the election, and I can report to this House that there has been a considerable amount of work

done in this area. We've met with many people in the whole social agency area, our partners in this area. This is a plan which will result from a community discussion. It won't be a government plan; it will be a plan that's owned and operated by Albertans and for Albertans. It's integral to the future of this province and to reducing the social cost of failure in this province.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that 400,000 Albertans, including 78,000 children, live in poverty in this province, a situation that developed under 40 years of Conservative rule, and given that that's either something that the government is going to do something about or the Speech from the Throne means nothing, will the Premier tell us which one?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been very strong on this matter right from the day that she took office. She was very strong on this matter when she asked me to take on the role of Human Services back in October. She was very strong on this matter during the election campaign. She was very strong on this matter when she asked me to continue the mandate in Human Services.

We're going to take on poverty in this province, and we're going to take on child poverty in this province. We're going to make the social policy framework integral to the way that we deal to ensure that Albertans have an opportunity to be successful and an opportunity to take advantage of the opportunity which is Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

#### **Cancellation of Jubilee Auditoria Performances**

*(continued)*

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Falun Dafa associations in Edmonton and Calgary have presented the world-renowned Shen Yun performances to sold-out audiences at the government-owned Jubilee auditoriums since 2007. The Culture minister's rash cancellation of next year's performances means the show will have no venue large enough to accommodate it and effectively ban Shen Yun's world-class performances from Alberta. Representatives are here today hoping for a resolution to the mess this government has created. To the Minister of Culture: will she reverse her decision today and reinstate the cancelled Shen Yun performances?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's really important to note that the Jubilees for the past 55 years have hosted national and international performances from all over the world. I'm very proud of that record. As I indicated previously, my officials have offered to meet with the Shen Yun group, and I'm looking forward to that.

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

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Culture: given the silence Falun Dafa encountered when they tried raising their concerns with the Culture minister privately and given that the only correspondence they received from the government was a surprise cancellation of the Shen Yun performances, will she apologize to the Falun Dafa representatives in the gallery

today for how she has treated them and immediately reinstate the 2013 performances?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as mentioned previously, I'm not going to apologize for the safety of the performances or the musicians for that matter. I think it's really important to note that when there are contractual obligations between a performing group and the Jubilee, that's something that I'm looking at. Again, I think it's important to note that my officials will be meeting with them, and I'm looking forward to the outcome of that meeting.

We know that the Jubilee is a fabulous place for performances, and we know that many groups look forward to performing there.

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

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Culture: if she is unwilling to reinstate the Shen Yun performances today, will she at least commit to meet with the Falun Dafa Association or with a mediator and give a date in hopes of resolving the issues they have raised?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very first official request to my office came on May 16. Following that, I have asked my officials to meet with them. At the end of that, I will look forward to that report.

I think at the end of the day, for me, we know that many groups that come to the Jubilee Auditorium look forward to coming to it. As well, in the next two years the facilities are both fully booked.

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

2:10

#### **Twinning of Highway 63**

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following the tragic fatalities on highway 63 at the end of April the province has committed to completing a report on the status of highway 63. My questions today are for the Minister of Transportation. Albertans are asking for our province to take action. Why do we need another report?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the province has not waited to take action. I would be pleased for the House to know that the province has already spent about a billion dollars in and around Fort McMurray, improving that road. In the present and upcoming three-year budget there is \$450 million already approved, after which time the road from just north of Wandering River down to highway 55 will be twinned.

Mr. Speaker, the additional report coming up is so that we can speed up the twinning of the road between Wandering River and Fort McMurray, and that will be done with the able assistance of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good. My first supplemental to the same minister: what's the minister doing today to improve safety on highway 63?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has always been enforcement on that road, but there has been increased enforcement. In fact, a couple of weekends ago the officials wrote in excess of 600 tickets, and that is in recognition of the behaviour that needs to change. This government is focused on doing that, and we will not stop until we make it better, which is why we have a special adviser, which is why the Premier has been very strong on saying that we will twin it. Between now and the time that it's twinned, we will make constant improvement.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: now, we know that highway 63 is a unique highway and there are many challenges with construction on that road, but what are you going to do to address these challenges?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, actually, some of the challenges have been met, and we'll continue to meet the other ones. Because this road needs to be built through an area of muskeg and in weather with fairly extreme temperature variation, it is a little more complicated than other roads. We are working through all those issues. We have addressed, essentially, all the environmental issues, and we will be constantly vigilant. As more issues come up, we are committed to dealing with each and every one of them until the road is completed.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

#### Prohibited Donations to Political Parties

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, just a day after the Premier promised a new era of transparency and accountability as the guiding principles of this government, Elections Alberta reported that there have been 28 cases of illegal donations made to the governing PC Party. The details of these investigations are kept secret because of the legislation this Premier passed while Justice minister. Even the PC president, Bill Smith, admitted that it's time to change the laws. Will the Premier turn the page and do the right thing and commit to changing the disclosure laws in the name of open and transparent government?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for that question. I share his concern about openness and transparency, but we must go back to the facts. In 2008 the legislation was changed. Why? At the request of the Chief Electoral Officer at that time. If he has other recommendations, I'm happy to go and look at them now, but we are simply following the law that the Chief Electoral Officer requested that we put in.

**Mr. Saskiw:** The Chief Electoral Officer said that he's just upholding the legislation. He said that it's the government's job to deal with issues of transparency.

Given that the Premier continues to lack the political will to act now and do the right thing on this very serious matter of illegal donations, will she at least do the ethical thing and reveal how much money her party has received, ensuring that every last penny has been returned?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has been very clear. A previous Chief Electoral Officer put recommendations to this Chamber for changes to the legislation. This Legislature, as it normally does, has adhered to his request and has amended the law. The Chief Electoral Officer is upholding the law that came about by his predecessor's recommendation. If the current Chief Electoral Officer feels that changes need to be made to this legislation, we definitely will take it under advisement and introduce such changes if required.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Mr. Speaker, you don't need a law or recommendation to do the right thing.

Will the Premier at least agree that it's extremely unethical for this government to withhold information on illegal donations from Albertans, and will she ensure that all illegal donations identified by the Chief Electoral Officer have been returned and publicly reported?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this member will learn very soon that he's in this Chamber not only to make laws but also to follow laws. This Premier and this Chamber will follow the laws of the land. There is a law in place right now that was brought upon the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer. If changes need to be made, changes will be made and then followed. At this point in time this government and the Chief Electoral Officer are following the law that is on the books, which, by the way, as I said earlier, came about upon his recommendation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, did you have a question inserted here?

If not, we'll move on to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### Taxation Policy

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Deciding what to do with highway 63 should be relatively easy. Find some asphalt; hire some workers; build the road. Unfortunately, it's a lot harder to find money to pay for it when the government does not collect the revenue we need from the citizens. Instead, the government has opted to spend all of our resource revenue on day-to-day expenses rather than saving revenue generated from oil and gas. To the Finance minister: given that roads are legitimate expenses for the government to make, why are we not getting rid of our flat-tax system, that sees a person making a million dollars a year pay the same rate of tax as someone making \$30,000 a year, so we can afford things like highway 63?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I recall, there was that kind of a plan put forward to the people of Alberta in their platform, and it didn't do so well for them because I don't think the people of Alberta recognized that that was going to be something that would be beneficial for them.

We are looking at various alternatives as to how we can look at our capital and build our capital. Highway 63: as the Minister of Transportation has already indicated, there is a considerable amount of money built into the budget today to complete roughly half of that twinning. We will go through our capital process and our budgeting process and look at ways we can expedite that as we move forward without raising Albertans' taxes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, I think the hon. minister would agree that spending all of our resource revenues on today's bills is irresponsible. Will the government then implement a policy that, one, either adopts a fair taxation system or, two, adopts actually a user-pay system that could pay for things. Like, put up a toll road on highway 63; do it that way. If you don't want to ask the citizens to pay through taxation, set up a toll road.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are some very, very good ideas that have been coming to our attention around things like toll roads and things like being able to have Albertans engaged in working on the capital of the province of Alberta. There are a number of things that we're going to be looking at over the coming weeks to determine how we might be able to expedite some of the capital in the province that's needed today.

I would also point out that Albertans have the benefit of a number of savings accounts, into which we have put a tremendous amount of royalty revenue over a number of years: the heritage savings trust fund, the access to the future fund, the Alberta heritage fund for medical research, the Alberta ingenuity fund, the sustainability fund, and there are others. We are in the strongest financial position, I dare say, of any jurisdiction in the western hemisphere, and Albertans recognize that.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, as the hon. minister knows full well, we haven't put a dime away into the heritage trust fund since 1987, so I question all the saving he's talking about. When will we stop spending all of our fossil fuel revenues to pay today's bills?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that this hon. member has not read anything that has been presented in the budgets that have been brought forward in this House over the last five or six years because he would then know that we have indeed put money into the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, that we have indeed put money into the access to the future fund, that we have indeed put money into the Alberta heritage fund for medical research and the sustainability fund as well. Those are all funds that benefit Albertans today and will benefit Albertans in the future. To suggest that we're somehow in a fiscal problem at this point in time is just not reality.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, the Speaker received six notes at once and inadvertently called for the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. However, I'm going to recognize the hon. member who should have been up for questions at that moment, the Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Results-based Budgeting

**Mr. Casey:** Mr. Speaker, the government has said that the new fiscal discipline brought about from results-based budgeting will control spending, but we haven't seen any results yet. My question is to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. Do you really think this will reduce spending?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, government did not stop working during the election campaign. The department officials had been working on the framework and how we would move forward. We do believe that there will be some savings that come from results-based budgeting, but it is about getting results for taxpayers. Looking at the size and scope of government, we're looking at

doing about a third of the programs that the government offers every year for the next three years, with a loop on that. That includes agencies, boards, and commissions. If we review these and find that what is being delivered is not giving the benefit and the value to Albertans, then we're going to change them. We do expect to see some savings through the process.

**Mr. Casey:** Mr. Speaker, my question is again to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. With oil prices down and a volatile world economy how can results-based budgeting possibly help this situation?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned earlier in question period, we are actually on target with the estimates for revenue that we had put forward at \$99 a barrel. It's unfortunate that the hon. members haven't figured this out yet. We don't budget for the moment; we budget for the year. Today's spot price might be lower than what our annualized number was. In fact, the annualized number today is at \$99 and change, and our revenue forecast was \$99.25. On the spending side results-based budgeting will focus on using Alberta's tax dollars in a responsible, more focused way, and we do expect to see results.

**Mr. Casey:** My last question is to the same minister. When can Albertans expect to see a balanced budget?

**Mr. Horner:** We expect that we will be balancing the budget in 2013-14 as we committed, as we promised, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member from Edmonton-Strathcona.

### Hardisty Care Centre Labour Dispute

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hardisty care's disputes inquiry found that taxpayer funding for staff is not "sufficiently different from comparable facilities to warrant the payment of wages lower than those paid to LPN's and HCA's under other collective agreements," yet the corporation won't negotiate with staff, compromises care for seniors, all the while pocketing taxpayer-funded profits. To the Minister of Human Services: why won't he admit that this strike is the direct result of this government's private delivery model for seniors' care?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of delivery models for care for seniors and people who need assisted living processes that all add to the choice that is available for all Albertans and all add to the capacity in the system for Albertans.

What the hon. member is talking about is a private dispute between an employer and employees as they try to get a first contract in place. This government did everything it could to get those parties together. We put in place a disputes inquiry board to ensure that they had the opportunity to come together. [interjection] We are ready, willing, and able to provide mediation in the process, and we encourage the parties to get together and to resolve this dispute in the interests of the patients and the residents in that facility.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. member for Edmonton-Centre, if you wish to get on the speaking list, I'd be happy to recognize you.

**Ms Notley:** To the Minister of Health: given that care staff at Hardisty are striking because their corporate employer pays them 30 per cent less than what it receives in taxpayer funds and given that this strike is further evidence that the government's insistence on paying taxpayer dollars to the private sector cuts services and

disrespects care workers for the sake of profiteering, why won't the minister admit that private, for-profit delivery either hurts care or costs more?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, this is not an ideological question. As my colleague the hon. Minister of Human Services has said, it is about an employer and a group of employees attempting to negotiate a first contract. The standards in this province that apply in continuing care facilities, whether with respect to accommodation or with respect to health care, apply equally to all providers, whether public, private, or not-for-profit.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** Well, it may apply equally, but it doesn't apply equally to the workers who should be getting the money that they're not getting right now.

Now, given that this government is encouraging more private delivery of seniors' care and given that the situation at Hardisty is a strikingly clear example of the profit motive undermining care for seniors, will the Minister of Health at least admit that his seniors' care plan will only serve to take money out of the pockets of Alberta seniors and Alberta taxpayers to raise profits for his private company friends?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the same regulations that apply to health care standards and accommodation standards apply to the setting of the accommodation rate that seniors pay in Alberta. That rate is the same regardless of the provider.

With respect to the quality of care and the safety of the patients in Hardisty, Mr. Speaker, I can advise the House that both Alberta Health Services and my ministry are monitoring the situation on a daily basis. I am completely satisfied as minister that all the standards are being adhered to and that the residents are in safe hands at Hardisty.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Continuing Care Standards

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday's throne speech said that the government "will design and implement a plan to extend the province's network of continuing care centres so seniors can find accommodations that suit their budget and family arrangements." My questions are all to the Minister of Health. Minister, what regulations or standards exist on patient-staff ratio in both public and private continuing care facilities?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to two new continuing care centres that were announced last year. We're very proud of those because they are going to facilitate complete aging in place for seniors, from a very independent level of living right through to long-term care and palliative care.

With respect to standards, as I said earlier, the standards that are in place in Alberta, the health care standards and the accommodation standards, apply to all operators. Again, rather than an ideological basis for the standards, our goal is to ensure that residents receive the appropriate level of care in the appropriate place at the right time. We will continue to design our strategy along those principles.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what spaceship he's on, but he's not on this one. You didn't answer the question. Who is responsible for implementation of the continuing care health service standards to ensure that seniors receive the care that they so richly deserve?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly not on that spaceship, but I will tell you, as I said in the answer to the earlier question, that the health care standards apply to all. The health care standards are set by government. They are done so in consultation with stakeholders, including residents, Albertans who use the system. We will continue to apply the principle of providing the appropriate level of care to the residents in their particular circumstances.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to go back to question 1. What regulations or standards exist on patient-staff ratio in both public and private continuing care facilities? That's staff ratio. Is it 1 to 140, 1 to 60, 1 to 40?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the information on continuing care health standards is public. As the hon. member well knows, it is available to her to refer to and to comment on as she wishes. With respect to particular patient-staff ratios there are various places in legislation and regulation where one can look.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the guiding principle for this government will be to provide the right level of care for the right resident in their appropriate circumstances.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Electricity Retail Market Review

**Mr. Dorward:** Mr. Speaker, while electricity prices are now low, just a few short months ago they reached record highs. My constituents want to know if these types of fluctuations are something they can expect to see in the future. To the Minister of Energy: what has been done to mitigate the dramatic fluctuations of the energy markets so that my constituents can better anticipate their electricity costs?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to take this question because we all know people for whom there's a lot of volatility in their electricity bills, and that actually can be a hardship for people on fixed incomes, for seniors, and for people who are more vulnerable. As a result, it's critically important, I think, that we take a good look at this question. Of course, the Premier announced a task force, an independent committee, in March to consider this very issue, the Retail Market Review Committee, led by Mr. Pound. We're looking forward to that, and I encourage Albertans to participate in that process.

2:30

**Mr. Dorward:** If that committee has been in place since March, what can they report today?

**Mr. Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, the committee will be reporting in due course. Obviously, they've been working away while the rest of us were engaged in other activities. As a result, over the next two weeks they'll be hearing from stakeholders in both Calgary and

Edmonton, more than 30 stakeholder groups, who've expressed an interest. I'd encourage all Albertans to follow that and send in their observations as well.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Dorward:** How do my constituents do that, send in their responses to those meetings?

**Ms Blakeman:** Read the website.

**Mr. Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, the comment from our colleague opposite is quite astute. Actually, Albertans can visit the website. It's [www.rmrc.ca](http://www.rmrc.ca). They can fill out an online survey. They can provide their input. They can attend the public sessions in Calgary and Edmonton over the next couple of weeks. We need to do all we can to ensure that there is less volatility in the electrical system for retail customers in this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Continuing Care Standards

*(continued)*

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health stated that seniors deserve aging-in-place accommodations that allow them to have a full range of care. Instead, while seniors are placed in continuing care, they are now being hit with a hidden seniors' tax that makes them pay hundreds more a month for such simple amenities as an extra shower or for assistance in managing their medication. Does the Minister of Health feel that it is okay to continue to nickel and dime our seniors for such basic assistance?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is not correct in suggesting that there are any sort of hidden charges or tax in the continuing care system. As I said in response to a question from her colleague earlier on, the continuing care accommodation rate is set by government. It is set according to regulation, and it is reviewed on a regular basis. That said, the hon. member may be referring to the contractual arrangements that Alberta Health Services maintains with operators that stipulate minimum levels of service that must be provided.

**Mrs. Towle:** Mr. Speaker, given the minister's answer, does the Minister of Health understand that even though a senior has been approved for home care, many facilities are not providing even the showers that home care has approved because of lack of staff? Is the minister saying that this is what our seniors deserve?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, again as I said in response to the hon. member's colleague's earlier question, there are two sets of standards that are administered by the province with respect to continuing care: the accommodation standards and the health care standards. If this hon. member is aware of an instance where the required services under the Alberta Health Services contract with the operator are not being provided, I would encourage her – I would in fact urge her – to report that to my department.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Towle:** Again to the minister: given that I'm hearing from families across the province that seniors are not even getting their one or two showers that are home care approved, where is the

money going, how is the government holding facilities accountable for our taxpayer dollars, and what are we doing to support our front-line staff?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've spent a lot of time in the House today explaining the standards, and I won't do that another time. Again, if the hon. member has some concerns about standards that are not being adhered to by particular operators, I would encourage her – I would in fact urge her – to report those. If the hon. member wants to entertain a discussion about what else can be done to enhance services that are offered to seniors, I would be equally interested in her input.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Family Care Clinics

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March of this year this government announced that Edmonton, Calgary, and Slave Lake would be the sites of three pilot family care clinics. Then during the recent provincial election the Premier announced that over the next three years Alberta would see those family care clinics expand to about 140 communities across the province. To the Minister of Health: can the minister explain in layman's terms what a family care clinic is and how they are going to improve access to health care?

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

**Mr. Horne:** Well, thank you very much. The hon. member is absolutely right. This government was elected by Albertans in large part on a platform that would see us offer primary health care delivered by teams to every Albertan in or near their home community. That commitment is unwavering, Mr. Speaker. The introduction of family care clinics, building on the success of primary care networks, is a big part of that. The services that are offered have been discussed in this House before. They are delivered by family physicians, nurse practitioners, and other professionals working in a team environment to meet the basic needs of families in the community.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since we have a shortage of health care providers, can the minister provide assurances that these clinics will be fully staffed and ready to serve Calgarians and Albertans?

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed, as we have said prior in this House, to using all health professionals to the full scope of their training and expertise. Much of our success in pursuing this goal of expanding family care clinics and offering primary health care to all Albertans will in fact be founded on that very principle. We'll be continuing to work with physicians, nurse practitioners, dietitians, many other health professionals to ensure that their opportunity to practise to their full scope of practice is made available to them.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how will the family care clinics be affiliated with the primary care networks that we presently have in our communities?

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

**Mr. Horne:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question because it has come up frequently. First of all, we will continue to consult with all the health professions involved in both models of care as we move ahead. But, more importantly, we will be in a position, I dare say, in a few short months to articulate very clearly to Albertans what suite of core services we want to make available to them in their community. We will be consulting with the communities in addition to the health professionals about their local needs, and we will be designing these models not in a cookie-cutter approach but in a design that allows us to meet individual community needs as they change over time.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### Critical Transmission Review Committee

**Mr. Anglin:** Mr. Speaker, the Critical Transmission Review Committee disallowed and prohibited stakeholders from submitting evidence. Instead, they only asked four questions of the stakeholders. The AESO responded to one of its questions, and I'm going to quote the AESO here: Alberta's electricity pricing system has actually worked very well for the citizens of Alberta. That was stated on December 12. Some 73 days later, on February 23, the Premier convened a commission to look into the pricing of electricity. To the Minister of Energy. Both can't be correct. Which is it? Is it the minister, or is it the AESO? Are the stakeholders here . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the nature of the question is as the member apparently didn't have a chance to complete his question. However, the Premier has put a process in place, and the process will be followed. It was clear and transparent, and we will commit to the process that the Premier has ultimately put in place.

I'm looking forward to the supplemental question. Maybe I can give a more clear answer.

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

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Critical Transmission Review Committee appointed by this government prohibited the submission of evidence, which in effect means that they did not review any evidence. With billions of dollars at stake will the Minister of Energy agree that they should have at least looked at some evidence before issuing its findings?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A decision has been made. Obviously, the body has been satisfied with the level of information and evidence that was provided to it. If the member has any questions relevant to the quality of information that was available to the body, he should be questioning that body directly. To my understanding the body felt that it had all the relevant information it needed in order to render a decision.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, anything further?

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Relevant information comes in the form of evidence. The CTTC cited evidence. It cited evidence from 2004, but it did not read that evidence, nor did it allow that evidence to be submitted. Will the Minister of Energy admit that the Critical Transmission Review Committee erred when it relied upon a document that it did not review and did not allow to be submitted as evidence?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** No.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

2:40

#### Aboriginal Relations

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month aboriginal relations was separated from intergovernmental, international, and aboriginal relations to become a stand-alone ministry. My first question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Will this separation be a real benefit to the aboriginal community?

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has been listening to aboriginal communities, and she recognizes the important role and contributions they make to Alberta's society and economy. Establishing Aboriginal Relations as a stand-alone ministry demonstrates the priority this government has placed on working with aboriginal communities on issues important to them, such as economic opportunities and benefits, establishing a consultation process, and providing more opportunities for aboriginal women and youth.

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

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: now as a stand-alone ministry what practical progress can we truly expect to see based on lessons learned from the past?

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important that we improve the relationship between government and Alberta's aboriginal population. This is vital to supporting the economic, social, and community development that's key for aboriginal peoples. This government has three main priorities: investing in families and communities, securing Alberta's economic future, and advancing world leadership of resources. Aboriginal communities and people are going to be an important part of that priority.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Based on these priorities, are we going to see real improvement for the aboriginal community over the next four years?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said in my first answer, the Premier sees the importance of our aboriginal communities to this province, so our first priority is going to be finishing the ongoing review of the First Nations consultation policy. We're then going to negotiate a long-term governance and funding arrangement with the Métis settlements, and we're also going to develop a First Nations economic benefits framework in colla-

boration with First Nations. I look forward to working with all our aboriginal communities on all of these matters in the near future.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, just before we proceed with Members' Statements, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two special guests that are good friends of the Wildrose. The first one is the former Member for Calgary-Glenmore, Paul Hinman, who is here to listen, actually, to our first question period as the Official Opposition and, obviously, listen to our leader as she does her response to the Speech from the Throne. The second is a friend of mine – and his name is John Winslow – who is also joining Mr. Hinman. We're pleased to see both of them. I'd ask them to stand and receive a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Just before recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore for her member's statement, I just want to comment that the first question period here went as smoothly as any question period I have ever witnessed in this Assembly. Part of the reason for that is probably because people actually took the time to listen to each other. Almost all of the questioners and the answer persons also referred through and to the chair their answers, and that helped a lot. Secondly, we didn't actually have a large amount of heckling until almost 11 minutes in, which was pretty good.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Primary Care Network Edmonton North

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to recognize an integral part of the provincial government's direction on primary health care service. A made-in-Alberta solution to primary care are the primary care networks, and the constituency of Edmonton-Decore is very fortunate to have the primary care network Edmonton North. A primary care network serves as a front door to health care, where a group of family doctors and Alberta Health Services, through their allied health professionals, co-ordinate health services for patients. They diagnose and manage health conditions, provide treatment of health issues or injuries, and provide wellness advice and programs.

On June 1, 2012, the primary care network Edmonton North will be celebrating its fifth anniversary of serving the health care needs of thousands of patients. As part of the anniversary celebrations, Mr. Speaker, the primary care network Edmonton North will be launching the Stepping Up! Pedometer Challenge, a fun way for teams of participants to improve personal health and healthy living. The pedometer challenge will run from June 1 to September 7, 2012, and having participants commit to a summer of improving their health by walking in north Edmonton's beautiful parks and green spaces and throughout our great capital city will truly be a benefit for life. I encourage all the residents of

north Edmonton to step up and step out in the pedometer challenge, and I wish the best success to all participants.

Congratulations and sincere appreciation to all of our health care professionals at the primary care network Edmonton North for five years of outstanding success and service.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

#### Shen Yun Performing Artists

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we all love about Alberta is how welcoming we are to different cultures. This diversity makes us strong. That is why I'm so disappointed and puzzled as to why this PC government has so badly mistreated Alberta adherents of Falun Dafa, a traditional Chinese practice whose key moral philosophies are truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.

For several years the Falun Dafa associations of Edmonton and Calgary have organized the appearance of Shen Yun at our northern and southern Jubilee auditoriums. These performances are a beautiful and skilful display of Chinese music, dance, and other performing arts. [Remarks in Mandarin] These are peaceful and hard-working Chinese-Canadians who love their province and country. They love democracy, free speech, and sharing the beauty of the Chinese culture. They deserve our respect, as do all Chinese-Canadians, regardless of their beliefs. [As submitted]

During a recent Calgary performance there were some technical, privacy, and safety issues that this group felt the southern Jubilee management failed to appropriately address. After having their complaints ignored by the arts and culture minister, Falun Dafa Calgary sent out a press release complaining about these issues. In response the minister went ballistic and sent a letter stating that because of their press release the Calgary association would be forbidden from organizing Shen Yun at the southern Jubilee, then, inexplicably, that Falun Dafa Edmonton, a completely separate group who had nothing to do with the complaint, would also lose its right to organize Shen Yun at the northern Jubilee. Obviously, these bullying tactics are unacceptable and very tiresome.

Premier, this is Alberta, not Beijing. Let us not forget who we are as Albertans and what we stand for. I ask you to reverse your minister's decision and let these Canadians, these Albertans, exercise their rights of free speech and expression, that so many of them came to this country and province to acquire.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member, and thank you for providing the translation in advance. I couldn't quite tell if it was Mandarin or Cantonese, but it sounded more Mandarin to me. Thank you for that.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

#### Fort Saskatchewan Community Hospital CT Scanner

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people living in and around Fort Saskatchewan, in my riding, are marking a milestone today. The first CT scan will be performed at the new, state-of-the-art Fort Saskatchewan community hospital. A first for Fort Saskatchewan, the \$1.2 million, high-definition scanner has capacity to provide 5,000 scans a year. Previously about 1,500 patients per year would have had to be transferred to facilities in Edmonton to have a CT scan, which is used to verify the presence or the absence of tumours, infection, abnormal anatomy, or other bodily changes.

The new scanner can also be used to perform virtual colonoscopies, a noninvasive procedure.

The \$87 million hospital opened to the public in April of this year. It is a magnificent facility. With more than triple the space of the health centre, the hospital offers 38 acute-care beds, 24-hour emergency services, and dedicated outpatient space. Additional services offered at the hospital include IV therapy clinics, obstetrics, general surgery, ophthalmology, diagnostic imaging, rehabilitation, pharmacy, and laboratory services. Built to meet LEED, leadership in energy and environmental design, silver standards, the facility contains many futuristic design elements, including touchless door openers, occupancy sensors, and surfaces that resist bacterial growth. Patient rooms have separate air exchangers to prevent the spread of airborne viruses. The new green building will also be highly energy efficient.

The people of Fort Saskatchewan and surrounding areas can be proud of this dramatic advance in health care, and this government is honoured to have played an important part in making that happen.

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

I will call upon the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

## 2:50 Excellence in Teaching Awards

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following on the introduction of the students and the teachers here from Alberta, it's an honour for me to rise today and recognize Alberta's 2012 excellence in teaching award recipients. It's our 24th year of this celebration. On the weekend there was a celebration in Calgary, which I was very grateful to attend, and some of my colleagues were there. Twenty recipients from across the province received an excellence in teaching award, and three received the Smart Technologies' innovative use of technology award. I'm bragging a little bit, but three of those teachers were from the constituency of Calgary-Varsity.

These recipients came from 341 nominees, and there were 130 semifinalists recognized in April. It goes without saying that these people have achieved remarkable results in the classroom. The diversity was incredible, from sustainable learning practices to reduce school waste to programs to teach children compassion and community service. There were teachers who were experts in paleontology, and we can guess where they were from. There were experts in dance, bullying prevention, and even auto mechanics for women. All of these recipients have influenced students' achievement and their sense of what is possible, and they ultimately contribute to this province's prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of their contribution to education in Alberta these recipients can access up to \$4,000 for professional development. The three teachers who received the innovative use of technology award received technology packages and a Smart board. I offer my congratulations to these 2012 excellence in teaching nominees, semifinalists, and award recipients. We're fortunate to have them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

## Hockey Day in Canada

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend it was announced that Lloydminster will be the host of one of Canada's most storied events in February of 2013. This event was established in 2000, and it's attended by local and national

celebrities alike. I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that because of your specific abilities you should be watching your mailbox for an invitation. It is viewed by millions of Canadians each year – you may want to get a haircut – and was last hosted by Alberta in 2001. I'm talking, of course, about Hockey Day in Canada.

Now, having been asked to make the bid less than a year ago, local officials and leaders were able to come together and make a successful bid for Lloydminster. The celebration will highlight Lloydminster's rich hockey heritage. The story of Lloydminster is not complete without the story of how we saved our own junior A team, the Bobcats. When they were threatened with a move about a year ago, local officials rallied, sold shares, and were able to save the team. This is just one of the reasons why Lloydminster will be the host of this event.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the city of Lloydminster, with Mayor Jeff Mulligan, on winning the rights to host Hockey Day in Canada.

**The Speaker:** We will all look forward to it, some of us more than others perhaps.

## Flat-tax Policy

**Mr. Hehr:** One thing all political parties agree on is that the building of roads is a legitimate purpose for governments to be involved in. Since roads are a legitimate purpose for governments, the citizenry should be asked to pay for them. The way we and other governments ask the citizenry to pay for things has been traditionally through taxation.

With that said, Alberta is different than other jurisdictions in that over the course of the last 25 years, instead of asking the citizens to pay for things like roads, schools, and hospitals, things that citizens use, we have spent every last dime of the \$225 billion we have received in petroleum revenues to pay for these services. In my view, this has not been in the best interest of Alberta's long-term future.

We only need to look to Norway, who has asked their citizens to pay for the things they use instead of spending this one-time gift, the fossil fuel revenue. In following this course of action, they have been able to save some \$700 billion in their heritage fund while we have been stuck at \$15 billion. I ask you: who has followed the wiser path?

We all agree that the Fort McMurray to Edmonton highway should be done and done soon. Accordingly, there are things we need: asphalt, workers, and the money to pay for it. I am certain we can find the asphalt and the workers, but here is a novel idea to consider. Ask the citizens to pay for what they use. This sounds fair. We could use this opportunity to eliminate the flat tax, a tax that sees a person making a million dollars a year paying the same rate of tax as a person making \$30,000 a year.

Another option, if this government is so loath to ask the citizens to pay for this project through general taxation, is to go to a user-pay system. Set up a toll road. Charge individuals and companies a flat rate to use the road.

The reason I'm advocating for one of these two policy choices is because I'm sick and tired of us spending our kids', grandkids', and their grandkids' inheritance from a one-time fossil fuel resource on things we use as citizens. We must pay our own way. Otherwise, we are shortchanging our future.

## Notices of Motions

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) earlier today I provided written notice to your office of my intention to raise a matter of privilege, which I hope I'll have the opportunity to present later today.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Noted.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling here from a constituent of mine, Nina Nath, and she is advocating, actually, on her property tax. She's a disabled Albertan; she has a disability. She's just an absolute firecracker. She's got incredible ideas, is quite a policy wonk, too. She's put together a note on how persons with disabilities should have tax exemptions similar to those enjoyed by seniors. It's a very compelling argument. I won't go through the whole thing here, obviously, but I encourage members of the Assembly to view this tabling, the Minister of Human Services to review it, and to seriously consider if there is something we can do to help them in this regard.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other tablings? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As per your request earlier today, notwithstanding that we've seen a circulation of a rotation for Members' Statements and question period now, I would table a package which consists of an e-mail to yourself transmitting the page signed by each of the House leaders with respect to question period rotation and a page signed by each of the House leaders with respect to Members' Statements rotation. I wouldn't say that it's in the nature of a House leaders' agreement but, rather, a consent of each House leader to these rotations applying for the time being.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an article written by probably one of the hon. Solicitor General's favourite authors, Mr. Andrew Coyne, on the use of toll roads and their use in paying for roads if the government is unwilling to tax and actually reducing vehicles on our roads.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry. I don't know how I forgot this one. There are many petitions to follow, but I would like to table a petition from residents of Edmonton and area who are supporting the Falun Dafa Association of Edmonton and asking the government to reconsider their decision to prohibit them from holding the Shen Yun performance in the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium. There are about a thousand signatures. This is just over the weekend. We have about 5,000 coming from Calgary and more on the way, sir.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other tablings? If not, the Speaker would like to table a few items. First of all, hon. members, pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table with the Assembly five copies of each of the following orders passed at the March 20, 2012, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: one, Members' Services Committee Order

01/12, Executive Council Salaries Amendment Order, No. 07; two, Members' Services Committee Order 02/12, Members' Allowances Amendment Order, No. 22; three, Members' Services Committee Order 03/12, Members' Committee Allowances Amendment Order, No. 08. Please note that all orders are effective as of March 20, 2012.

Also, hon. members, I am pleased to table the requisite number of copies of a report titled Review of Compensation of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, dated May 2012, submitted by the Honourable J.C. Major.

3:00

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Campbell, Minister of Aboriginal Relations, pursuant to the Metis Settlements Act the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal annual report 2011.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horner, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation Alberta 2011 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, it is 3 o'clock. I think we have concluded the Routine unless there are any other items to come.

The hon. House leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent of the House to revert to government business given that there is not private members' business on the Order Paper for today.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we'll deal with that momentarily. We have a question of privilege to deal with first.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Thank you.

### Privilege

#### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I just confirm that you're inviting me to make my representations with respect to the point of privilege?

**The Speaker:** Yes, please, hon. member, if you would.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) this morning I provided written notice to your office of my intention to raise a matter of the privileges of this Assembly today. Specifically, on May 24 at 1:30 p.m. the Premier and the Minister of Human Services provided a news conference on both the throne speech and Bill 1, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, to members of the media in the Carillon Room with the understanding that information provided in the news conference was embargoed until the throne speech commenced later that afternoon. A member of my staff attempted to attend that news conference and briefing but was told that opposition staff were not allowed and was specifically turned away.

The throne speech occurred at roughly 3:10 on that day, Mr. Speaker, thereby lifting the embargo that was applied to the discussions of both the throne speech as well as the bill. The bill itself was not introduced until roughly one half-hour later, and it was a little past that before all members of this Assembly were given the opportunity to review the bill. The bill was not on notice on the Order Paper, but it was given first reading that afternoon.

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

*Erskine May*, 24th edition, on page 251 describes contempt:

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

Now, Mr. Speaker, a similar case of this kind of privilege was raised a number of years ago in this House. In a ruling on March 5, 2003, at page 304 of *Hansard* the Speaker found that a government briefing provided to the media concerning a bill "when the bill was on notice but before it was introduced constitutes a prima facie case of privilege as it offends the dignity and the authority of this Assembly." The difference between that case in 2003 and the one today is that the bill in 2003 was on notice but not yet introduced in the House when the media but not the opposition received a briefing on the bill.

Reading through the record of debate on the 2003 privilege issue shows that the point about the bill being on notice was considered important because that notice is interpreted as a signal that the bill is no longer in the draft stage, Mr. Speaker, but rather the government has completed any outside consultations it wishes to conduct, and the bill is now in its final form and ready to be introduced. Now, we all know that as a matter of course the government absolutely discusses new legislation with stakeholders or the general public when that legislation is in the draft stage. It's only once it has passed that stage that the details of the bill must be provided to all members of the House.

Bill 1, as we know, was not on notice on Thursday. Nevertheless, it was very clearly past the draft stage and in its final form when the government discussed the bill with the media as the bill was introduced in the House just over two hours later.

If the fact that the bill was not on notice could be used by the government as a loophole in the practices of this House, thereby allowing the government to provide details about emerging, or upcoming, legislation to persons outside the House before it is introduced and shared with members of this Assembly, that would have the same effect of offending the dignity and the authority of the Assembly, with which the Speaker's 2003 ruling in this House was concerned.

I would also note that the ruling in 2003 was influenced by a similar incident which was raised as a point of privilege in the House of Commons in 2001. Now, I won't go into the details of that incident now, because we're trying to be brief, as it was already discussed in here in 2003. Further details are available from the *Hansard* of the House of Commons from March 14 and March 19, 2001. However, the facts there are closer to the facts here in that the media was briefed in the morning and the bill was introduced the same day. I will only add that the Speaker of the House of Commons at that time said in his ruling the following:

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

Opposition MLAs and their staff members are routinely given information about government bills prior to their being introduced in this House, and we abide by that embargo on that information,

so I don't know why the government chose not to do that in this instance.

By raising this issue, I am in no way criticizing the media. They did the job they were supposed to do, and I've heard no suggestions that anyone who attended the 1:30 news conference broke the embargo to which they had agreed.

I believe I'm raising this at the earliest opportunity. The issue of contempt was not evident to me until after I left the House Thursday afternoon. When I left the House, I took a few minutes to familiarize myself with the contents of Bill 1 before speaking to the media about it. While it is a brief bill, certainly many other bills are not. I believe the fact that the media had the information on the bill for about two hours prior to my receiving it affected my ability to comment on it and to offer them analysis that differed from that which they had already heard from the government.

The previous rulings on this issue, Mr. Speaker, indicate that the dignity of this House is threatened when its members are not the first to see legislation. The Assembly should be the place where public debate about legislation begins. I'm arguing that out of fairness to all members and out of respect for this House our privilege of being the first to see the details of legislation that is brought before the House must be maintained. That was not the case with Bill 1 last Thursday at 1:30.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore urge you to find that the events on Thursday constitute a prima facie case of breach of privilege. Thank you.

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

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I received a copy of the notice, the letter that was sent to you this morning, just after lunch. I want to start by apologizing to the hon. member and to the House. I have no idea why opposition researchers or others would have been turned away from that news briefing. They ought not to have been, in my view. I will raise that immediately with the people involved to ensure that that type of thing doesn't happen again. I think it's quite appropriate for embargoed briefings to happen, and it's quite appropriate for opposition members to be in those embargoed briefings. If others are being briefed, the opposition should be. That's been the practice in the past, I believe, and that should have been the practice this time. I wasn't aware that it was not, and for that I would apologize.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think I should be very clear to the House that there was no parliamentary privilege breached in this. The bill itself, of course, was not shared. It was talked about in general terms, not specific terms. No specific wording was talked about. That is rather the norm, I think, where, in fact, as House leader I have on many occasions issued a news release a week or so prior to a session, indicating what bills would be involved in the session, giving the subject matter of those bills, and in some cases discussing some details relative to what might be in those bills, and in some cases referring members of the media to the minister responsible for the bills to get the details. On the day that the bill is introduced, there's often a news release sent out and more briefings with respect to more of the specific nature of the bills.

It is obviously important that members of the House see the actual bill in its final draft form before anyone else, and to the best of my knowledge we've always adhered to that practice. It would certainly be my intention as House leader to continue to adhere to that practice. That's the custom and tradition of the House. It is important for members of this House to have the bill, to be the first to see the final draft of a bill.

3:10

I would hope that we would be able to continue the tradition, obviously, of briefing opposition members on an embargoed basis – I think it's very important to do that ahead of time – and, of course, to brief the media. But, again, there should not be a situation where the media is briefed without the opposition being briefed, whether that's done in general or on specifics. Again, I would apologize if that's what occurred, and I take the hon. member's word for it that that is what occurred. So I'd apologize to the hon. member and to the House for that.

That being said, again, the briefing that happened with respect to the bill was in a general sense both with respect to the throne speech and the bill itself and was nothing of a specific nature, to the best of my recollection. Certainly, nothing was quoted from the bill, and the bill was not circulated.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join in the conversation as the House leader for the third party, that being the Liberal caucus, in this House. While I appreciate the words from the Government House Leader offering his opinion that such an action should not have taken place and would not had he been directly in charge of this, I will note that this is not the first time that this has happened in this House, and indeed it's not the first time that this has happened in this House with more or less the same group of people here. On March 4, 2003, almost identical circumstances took place. Now, that's nine years ago, but, you know, the Government House Leader was here. I was here. There are a number of others who were here who should be able to remember this.

Part of the issue in play is the immediacy of when the bill was going to be presented to the House. We have a set of circumstances here in which – and we all acknowledge that the government has been very good at working with their critics to provide a three-column document or a verbal briefing on things but never the actual bill. Occasionally some of us have also seen draft bills that clearly indicate “draft” right across it in a watermark.

But, no, in this case I think what is of particular note is that the media release happened, releasing the information that was not available to members of the House and not available to members of the opposition, on a bill that was imminently coming before the House. They were clearly dealing with a finished bill. It was not going to go out for another set of consultations. It was not going to go through any other parliamentary revisions. This was a complete and final bill that was going to be presented in the House in less than 24 hours, and that is of particular note here because it is specifically mentioned in Speaker Milliken's remarks that have already been referenced by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona.

I think it's also important to note that the media are not stakeholders. They are valued colleagues in this democratic process, but they are not stakeholders, and I think we would all be fooling ourselves if we pretended that the media were somehow filling that stakeholder position.

I think it's important in your ruling, Mr. Speaker – and I would ask you to keep it in mind – that this is not the first time this has happened. This is, indeed, the second time in a period of nine years that it's happened, and I do wonder at the government's forgetfulness given the legions of staff that they have behind them to help them remember this sort of thing.

Secondly, we were not dealing with a document that was in any way going to be subject to additional changes in any way, shape, or form. We have a document that, as Speaker Milliken referenced, was shortly coming before the House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Anderson:** I'll keep it short, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me. I would say that, obviously, the question of the point of privilege I'll leave to you to speak to. Because of some technical things, meaning paper on top of the fax machine, we didn't receive this until about half an hour before. But I will say that this is one of the reasons why members of the opposition are so concerned that we are given enough time in question period to question ministers and so forth. There is this feeling that we don't have access to the government ministers, and this is the type of thing that happens. I realize it was a mistake – and I want to compliment the House leader opposite for admitting to that and undertaking that it won't happen again – but this is the general feeling that opposition members face, that they're not viewed as part of, essentially, the Assembly sometimes.

I would just hope that the new government ministers as well as the ones that have been there before will do everything they can to open up their offices to their critics so that they can come in and have a working relationship with them and get the information that they need. I think that if we have that type of culture in this Legislature, the things that we've seen here that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has brought up will be far less common.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

We've heard the points from a number of members. Before I go on, because we have so many new members in the Assembly with us and I know that they likely haven't had a chance to memorize all the standing orders yet, which I'm sure they will, I would like to have it noted that points of order – and that includes points of privilege such as has been raised – do have a very high, in fact the highest, priority here during the Routine. That is why we've allowed our Routine to go beyond 3 o'clock without the need for an amendment or a motion to waive 7(7).

That having been said, I will make the following comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has raised a point of privilege, which is, of course, the most serious point of order that can be raised in this House. The Speaker wants to note officially that the hon. member has met the technical requirements. In other words, she did provide a written copy at least two hours before the commencement of today's session. Specifically, the Speaker's office received her letter dated May 28, 2012, this morning at 10:57. She also gave notice at the appropriate time. Thank you. I'm sure all members noted that. Finally, she has provided an outline, and we've heard from the Government House Leader, from the Liberal opposition, and from the Official Opposition in that respect.

That having been said, I would take some time to review the arguments and points that were raised by all the members, including the initiator. I will take some time to consider all of these points, and at that time I will make a further comment.

### Orders of the Day

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There being no private members' business on the Order Paper available for business today, I would request unanimous consent of the House to revert to government business so that we might, as was anticipated Thursday, take into consideration His Honour's Speech from the Throne and other government business that's on the Order Paper.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I will get to the question in a moment. I just want to explain briefly that we're asking for unanimous consent here through the Government House Leader's motion. If you grant it, then we'll proceed as the government wishes. If you do not give unanimous consent, then this Assembly will stand adjourned immediately.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, your motion has succeeded.

## Government Motions

### Amendments to Standing Orders

8. Mr. Hancock moved on behalf of Mr. Denis:  
Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended as follows:
- (1) Standing Order 52(1)(b) is amended by striking out "17 Members" and substituting "21 Members".
  - (2) Standing Order 52.01 is amended by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:
    - (1) At the commencement of the first session of each Legislature, 3 Legislative Policy Committees, consisting of 25 Members each, shall be established to consider the following subject areas:
      - (a) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Health, Human Services, Justice and Solicitor General, Culture, Education, and Service Alberta;
      - (b) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Agriculture and Rural Development, Aboriginal Relations, International and Intergovernmental Relations, Enterprise and Advanced Education, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, and Infrastructure;
      - (c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Transportation, Municipal Affairs, Treasury Board and Finance, and Energy.
  - (3) The Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta are amended by striking out "Policy Field" wherever it occurs and substituting "Legislative Policy".

3:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, this motion is debatable. Are there any speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. I was part of the negotiating team that negotiated with the Government House Leader when the original policy field committees were established. I'm wondering now, given point (3), that "Policy Field" committees, those two words, will be struck out wherever they occur and substituted would be "Legislative Policy," do we take it, then, that the government's last two-year tradition of having budget debates debated in these policy field committees, the budgets for those particular departments as named previously by the Government House Leader, would now be debated in the legislative policy committees? If there is someone available to answer that question, that would be helpful.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other speakers?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think some of the discussion that we've had around the operation of the House was that we would be able to sit and talk about, going forward, what other things in the standing orders we might want to reflect on and how we might do things differently. I would certainly invite House leaders to engage in that discussion immediately post this session. Then potentially, of course, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing might meet and discuss it as well. I think that's an open question as to whether or not we continue with what's in the standing orders now of referring the budget processes to either. The option is to allow them to come to the House in Committee of Supply or to the committee, and that would be the status quo with these three committees unless it's changed, but I think the discussion has been whether we want to look at how we do budget as part of the standing orders discussion.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

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

### Standing Committee Membership Appointments

9. Mr. Hancock moved:  
Be it resolved that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's three legislative policy committees:
- (1) Standing Committee on Families and Communities: Ms Pastoor, chair; Mrs. Forsyth, deputy chair; Mr. Allen; Ms DeLong; Mr. Fox; Mr. Fraser; Mrs. Fritz; Mrs. Jablonski; Ms Jansen; Mr. Jeneroux; Ms L. Johnson; Mr. Kang; Ms Kubinec; Mr. Lemke; Mrs. Leskiw; Mr. Luan; Mr. McAllister; Ms Notley; Mr. Pedersen; Mrs. Sarich; Mr. Saskiw; Dr. Swann; Mr. Wilson; and Mr. Young.
  - (2) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future: Mr. Amery, chair; Mr. Bikman, deputy chair; Mr. Bhardwaj; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Donovan; Mr. Dorward; Mr. Eggen; Ms Fenske; Mr. Goudreau; Mr. Hehr; Ms Jansen; Mr. Luan; Mr. McDonald; Ms Olesen; Mr. Quadri; Mr. Quest; Mr. Rogers; Mr. Sandhu; Dr. Sherman; Ms Smith; Dr. Starke; Mr. Strankman; Mrs. Towle; and Mr. Young.
  - (3) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship: Ms Kennedy-Glans, chair; Mr. Rowe, deputy chair; Mr. Anderson; Mr. Anglin; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Bilous; Ms Blakeman; Dr. Brown; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Cao; Mr. Casey; Ms Fenske; Mr. Fraser; Mr. Hale; Mr. Hehr; Ms L. Johnson; Ms Kubinec; Mr. Lemke; Mrs.

Leskiw; Mr. Sandhu; Mr. Stier; Mr. Webber; Mr. Xiao; and Mr. Young.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would note that there is still a vacancy on each of those committees. That is a vacancy that would have been filled by a nominee from the fourth party. They have chosen not to nominate a person at this time, and therefore I propose that that spot on each committee be left vacant.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, Motion 9 is debatable. Are there any other speakers?

Seeing none, I would invite the hon. Government House Leader to close debate if he wishes.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

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

#### Standing Committee Membership Appointments

10. Mr. Hancock moved on behalf of Mr. Denis:

Be it resolved that the following members be appointed to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Mr. Kang, Dr. Starke, Mr. Stier, and Mr. Webber.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Normally the members of this committee would be appointed on day 1; however, as members will note, we've just expanded the size of the committee today, and this now adds the remaining four members to the expanded committee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, this motion is not debatable, so I will simply ask those who are in favour of the motion as proposed by the Government House Leader to say aye, and those opposed, please say no.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

#### Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

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

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

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

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

**Ms Olesen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a tremendous honour to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne presented by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta. I would like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for setting forth the vision of the 28th Legislature. I would also like to thank the hon. Premier for the opportunity to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne.

I am excited by the Premier's vision for Alberta and her commitment to move Alberta forward on so many fronts. Alberta is exceptionally fortunate to have a visionary, proactive leadership committed to making Alberta the best it can be and a leader on the

national and international stage. The Speech from the Throne puts forth a road map of fundamental change in the process of governance in Alberta. It signals a new openness and transparency in government and how government relates to the concerns of Albertans. It provides certainty of direction, with multiyear budgets for education, advanced education, health, and municipal services so that institutions and municipalities can plan with certainty.

However, it also sets forward a methodology to ensure fiscal integrity by implementing results-based budgeting. Every part of government is to be scrutinized every three years to set the outcomes that are expected, to measure the results, and to report on findings so that Albertans can see where and why their tax dollars are being spent. This will reassert the centrality of ministerial responsibility and accountability. No longer will elements of government be assured of continuing support for functions that are not meeting real needs in real time.

The Speech from the Throne also sets forth a commitment to regulatory streamlining, with the goal of a single nimble, responsive regulator for upstream oil and coal projects, and it makes clear that regulatory facilitation shall not be at the expense of the environment. The direction is clear that this government will pursue world-leading resource stewardship to safeguard our environment. That includes partnering with the federal government to implement a comprehensive environmental monitoring system. It will invest in research and innovation and partner with industry to maintain and grow our world-class resource economy, and it will facilitate the opening of new markets through co-operative efforts with other provinces and other jurisdictions. I think all Albertans will be pleased by this fundamental change in approach to governance that is transparent, focused, and target-driven.

While this first session is not heavy with legislation, as we are just getting started, I am so pleased that one of our first tasks will be to extend workers' compensation coverage to first responders suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. PTSD can be completely debilitating, and providing access to treatment is the least we can do. We have to help those who protect all of us.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend my sincere congratulations on your election to this important office. It has been my pleasure to know you now for many years, and I have great confidence that you will carry out your duties with equity and wisdom. Thank you in advance for your guidance and counsel.

Next, I would like to offer my warmest wishes to the new cabinet. As you undertake your responsibilities of putting the Premier's vision of this great province forward, I wish you all the best. I know that all of your colleagues who sit as private members are prepared to assist you along the way.

I would like to extend my congratulations to all the members of this Assembly on your recent elections. I look forward to working with all of you in making Alberta and our communities better places to live, work, and play now and into the future.

I would also like to thank the residents of Sherwood Park for their confidence and the honour of representing their views and interests in this Legislature. I must commend my predecessor, the hon. Iris Evans, for her years of service to our community as MLA from 1997 to 2012 and for her 18 years in municipal government before that. Iris is truly an institution in our community.

Now a little bit more about my community. The Sherwood Park constituency encompasses about two-thirds of the hamlet of Sherwood Park, which is part of and governed by the specialized municipality of Strathcona county, Alberta's third-largest municipality. As an urban centre with rural roots and a governance

structure that encompasses both urban and rural residents, Sherwood Park and Strathcona county have a different historical context than many Alberta communities. Its municipal origins date back to its establishment as fire and labour district No. 2 by the then government of the North-West Territories in April 1893. It was renamed local improvement district 517 in 1913 and acquired the Strathcona name in 1945 after the merger of the municipal districts of Clover Bar and Strathcona. Strathcona county was one of the first specialized municipalities, established in Alberta in 1996.

As much of the county was not well suited to extensive agriculture and with limited natural resource wealth of its own, the county welcomed industrial development associated with the discovery of oil in the region after World War II. Sherwood Park was established to provide accommodation to refinery workers and their families in 1954 and gradually built on that base as it attracted other residents and industry.

Through a co-operative partnership with industry and other municipal jurisdictions such as the Strathcona Industrial Association, the Alberta Industrial Heartland Association, the Capital Region Board, and its predecessor the Alberta Capital Region Alliance the county built co-operative relationships to attract and grow its industrial base and commercial opportunities. By the way, I'm pleased to note that one-quarter of the 1995 to '98 Strathcona council that initiated the Heartland now sits in this Assembly, myself and the hon. Member for Vegreville-Fort Saskatchewan.

Today Sherwood Park constituency is home to two of the three oil refineries in Strathcona county as well as numerous other heavy industries and related manufacturing operations. Together with our regional partners in the Alberta Industrial Heartland we account for 43 per cent of basic chemical manufacturing output in all of Canada. We have built and continue to build industrial synergy and to attract new industries and value-added production.

I am really excited to be a part of a government committed to broadening our economic base to realize the full potential of our resources through research and initiatives such as carbon capture. We have enormous potential for further secondary processing and manufacturing. Concentrations of like industry offer great potential to jump-start further developments as the off-gases or heat of one industry forms the base of another.

Also, upgrading together with carbon capture offers potential to deliver the greenest oil on the planet. With three major carbon capture projects going forward, Alberta is fast becoming a world leader in this area. We have the potential to be Canada's Silicon Valley of petroleum processing and chemical manufacturing. By 2007 nine upgraders were proposed or under construction in the heartland region, with most already having acquired substantial land acquisitions. While that number certainly dwindled with the crash of 2008, many large oil sands producers have retained their land positions with a view to future growth, and North West is well along on design for work on its direct-to-diesel bitumen-in-kind project in Sturgeon.

Sherwood Park has also increasingly attracted a growing number of engineering firms with a wide range of talents, which bodes well for our future. Incidentally, I had the pleasure of representing our government at the 100th anniversary of Stewart Weir last week.

We also have a number of other strengths. Strathcona county was recently awarded the designation of being the best place in Canada to raise a family and get a job by *MoneySense* magazine on the basis of a wide variety of criteria. Sherwood Park is home to the first mega recreation centre in western Canada, combining two indoor soccer fields, a lane pool, a wave pool, two hockey arenas, leisure

ice, gymnasiums, an indoor running track, and a huge fitness centre. We were the first in western Canada.

It also boasts a number of other fine facilities, including Festival Place. We offer a continual lineup of live entertainment, a gorgeous new library and civic centre, and miles of hiking and biking trails.

Our long-awaited hospital, announced in 2005, is finally well under way with the completion of phase 1 projected for 2013 and the final build-out to be completed in 2016.

I was extremely pleased on the weekend to see that the contract for the final leg of the Anthony Henday has been awarded, and the construction is to commence in June. This 27-kilometre stretch of double-plus highway includes nine interchanges, eight railway overpasses, and two bridges. It will make a tremendous difference to travel in and around the capital region and will also make a particular difference on the Yellowhead route through Edmonton.

A new courthouse has also been a priority for our community. To facilitate that, the county has offered up land adjacent to our RCMP detachment.

I look forward to working with all of you to make our communities and this province the best it can be. But I just need to reflect on a very personal note. I would like to share that my McPhail forefathers came to this country with the Hudson's Bay Company. They worked in the fur trade in the Hudson Bay lands, then known as Rupert's Land. I think they would be proud of what we in western Canada have accomplished together so far.

Growing up, I had a very special relationship with my grandmother, Anne McPhail, born Maximchuk. She inspired my interests in government as a way of making things better. She used to tell me stories about the depression, and she also told me that the first woman elected to Parliament was also a McPhail. Agnes Macphail was elected as a Progressive in 1921.

So I am especially proud to be part of a progressive government, committed to putting in place the infrastructure, education, public health care, and social supports to enable all Albertans to be the best they can be in an open, inclusive society. We have a tremendous opportunity to thrive in a time of great global uncertainty. Albertans have put their faith in our government to manage their affairs, and I pledge to do my very best.

In closing, I would like again to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his inspiring words. Again I thank our Premier for her inspiring leadership and commitment to the people of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, it has been an honour to rise today and move the acceptance of the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly a privilege to rise in the House today to second the motion to accept the Speech from the Throne. I also feel extremely honoured to be standing here as the representative for the great constituency of Calgary-Hawkwood and to have been elected to such a strong government, one with a mandate to respond to change.

To quote the Speech from the Throne, "The last 41 years have brought incredible benefits to our province and seen society evolve in ways that have changed how Albertans think and live." I couldn't agree more. The Alberta that we know and love today is not the same as it was in the past, and neither is our government. We have changed to reflect the desires and the needs of Albertans. Just like those who governed us before, we will put forward a responsive vision for the time and the issues that we face.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to live in an inclusive and diverse province. As we heard in the Speech from the Throne, the people of Alberta “have declared that they are not content to gaze inward and build walls. They want to look outward and build bridges.” I believe we can attribute some of those desires to the fact that more and more people from all across the world are choosing to call Alberta home, and one of those persons is me, standing here. In fact, in 2010 32,640 immigrants landed in Alberta, which is an increase of approximately 58 per cent from 2006. Research has shown that this trend will continue.

**3:40**

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has clearly evolved due to its changing demographics, and so has the constituency of Calgary-Hawkwood. I would like to take a few minutes to introduce you to my constituency and to a little bit of my background. Calgary-Hawkwood is made up of five communities in northwest Calgary: Silver Springs, Ranchlands, Hawkwood, Citadel, and Arbour Lake. It is one of the four new constituencies established in the province during this past election. The five communities were drawn from three former constituencies representing both established and new communities. It mirrors Albertans whose legacy dates back generations and the ones who have just arrived. I believe that Calgary-Hawkwood is a good example of the people and diversity of our great province. I cannot emphasize enough how proud I am to call Calgary-Hawkwood my home and to have been chosen by people in this constituency to represent them in this Assembly.

This is a riding with a rich history and promising future. I am humbled to be counted among such an impressive group of elected officials representing this area. Some of the notable members in our history are former Premier William Aberhart, former Premier Ernest Manning, and former Lieutenant Governor John Bowen. Most of all, I am proud to be a member of this government, led by our Premier. Twenty-three years ago, when I first arrived in this province as a newcomer from China, I arrived all but empty handed. Since then I have been working hard to establish myself, gain meaningful employment, and raise a loving and supportive family, something that so many new Albertans strive for and are able to achieve, bolstered by the Alberta spirit.

As a newcomer I never dreamed that one day I would be standing here in this prestigious Assembly. It just goes to show that in this province anything is possible with hard work and determination. [some applause] Thank you. This reflects our pioneer legacy and continues to define our province today. There's no limit to what Albertans can achieve, and under the strong leadership of the hon. Premier I know that we'll continue to inspire Albertans from all backgrounds, all walks of life to reach their full potential.

Looking around today at all of my hon. colleagues in this House, I believe that the change we see in our demographics is very well represented in this House here. Alberta has become an all-embracing cultural mosaic. Together we represent the change that has occurred in our province. Regardless of our differences we're banded together by our shared core values that define us as proud Albertans. It doesn't matter where and when we came from. We all share something in common such as hard-working ethics, innovative spirit, and the importance of family. We're tireless in our pursuit of achievement. This is the pioneer spirit, the Alberta spirit. This is a spirit that makes us so unique, proud Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I remember quite clearly when I decided to run as an MLA. It was the time the hon. Premier spoke of her plan to invest in families and communities, as highlighted again in this throne speech. I knew then that I wanted to be part of that vision.

As a former community developer with a master's degree in social work and 21 years of public service experience I am passionate about serving families and communities. This is something near and dear to my heart. Strengthening family and building strong communities was one of the key themes of my campaign platform. Our government's commitment to strengthening families and building strong communities speaks to Albertans and echoes their values. The strong mandate in my riding and for our government across the province is humbling, but we'll move forward with this directive and do what Albertans have asked of us. Communities and families are the backbone of this great province, and when we work to strengthen them, we build a better Alberta.

As mentioned in the throne speech, this government will invest in families and communities through initiatives such as designing and implementing a plan to extend the province's network of continuing care centres so that seniors can find accommodations that suit their budget and their family arrangements; expanding family care clinics in consultation with local stakeholders and dedicated health care professionals so that families can have easy access to health care services and reducing the waiting times; providing stable and predictable three-year funding to core public services such as health care, education, and municipal services so that people in our community can access facilities and services to meet their needs; and Bill 1, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, which will guarantee workers' compensation coverage to first responders suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. Through actions such as these we're demonstrating that this government cares about people. We are passionate about making a difference in people's lives so that Albertans can enjoy a high quality of life that is second to none in the world.

Mr. Speaker, let me touch on another great aspect of the throne speech, which is Alberta's economy. Alberta is the economic engine of this country. Alberta remains in a strong position despite facing the economic uncertainty that has buffeted much of the world. Because of this, people from all over the world are watching us and wanting to learn from our experiences.

Here are a few facts worth noting. Alberta leads the nation in employment growth. Our province leads the continent as the most economically free jurisdiction in North America. Albertans earn the highest average wage, they enjoy the lowest overall tax in the country, and our government is committed to ensuring that it stays that way. We are focused on investing in people, building our savings, and maintaining the lowest overall tax structure in Canada.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I am very optimistic as I look forward to the next four years. I know that our government through our policy framework has the right plan in place. I also know that this government balances Albertans' socially progressive values with their fiscally conservative beliefs. The throne speech lays out our government's plan to focus on the things that matter the most to the people of this province. We have heard the voice of Albertans loud and clear for change and will work hard to keep their trust and ensure that the changes and progress they want will become our new reality.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his delivery of such a powerful throne speech and his service to this province and country. I look forward to working with all of my hon. colleagues in this House to build a better Alberta for us all.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Smith:** Hon. members, this is indeed an historic occasion. Not only do we have Alberta's first-ever elected female Premier; at the same time we also have an opposition leader who is a female. Mr. Speaker, you may have noticed that. This, obviously, is a first for Alberta, a very proud first, if I do say so myself, and is only the second time in Canada's 145-year history that women have represented both the government and the Official Opposition in a provincial Legislature.

3:50

To find the other example, you'd have to go all the way across the country to Prince Edward Island and back nearly 20 years to Premier Catherine Callbeck's Liberal government, opposed by Patricia Mella's Progressive Conservatives. In a province with a Jewish mayor in Edmonton and a Muslim mayor in Calgary I'm relieved that the image of Alberta is finally catching up with the reality no matter what fears may have been fostered during the election. We've got something to celebrate. Alberta is not just a reflection of a changing world. It's leading the way, which makes me extra proud to call myself an Albertan. Now, the Premier and I may not be the equals of Emily Murphy and Louise McKinney, but I know that we stand on the shoulders of giants – giants – great women of Alberta.

But I'm not just here as the leader of the Wildrose or the Leader of the Opposition. I'm here thanks to the folks in my riding, the people of Highwood. To them I say: I am honoured to be your voice in the Legislature, and I promise to do you proud. Though the riding has shifted geographically over the years, it's still a remarkable place with a storied history in Alberta politics, a history of leadership.

Albert J. Robertson, a Conservative MLA for what was then the constituency of High River, was the first Leader of the Official Opposition in Alberta, from 1906 to 1909, holding the fort against the Liberals of Alexander Rutherford. George Hoadley, MLA for what was then the constituency of Okotoks, was also a Conservative and Leader of the Official Opposition in 1918 and 1919. He went on to join an upstart grassroots party called the United Farmers of Alberta, which formed government in 1921, and then he had a long and diverse career in cabinet. Later on the region was represented by none other than William Aberhart, Premier from 1935 to 1943, and in a little less than four years – who knows? – Albertans may elect a second Premier that hails from High River.

Highwood is an extraordinary region, a collection of wonderful communities, a great mix of urban, suburban, acreage, and rural, warm and welcoming, truly a microcosm of the whole province, really, and much of it nestled along the Highwood and Sheep rivers. High River is the town I now call home with my husband, David, and our two dogs, Turk and Cain, who spend lots of time down by the river and are often muddy, covered with burrs, and deliriously happy.

Before I moved to High River, my stepson Jonothan came to live with us in Calgary, and I'm proud to say that he has just graduated with his bachelor of fine arts in print design from the Alberta College of Art and Design, one of the country's premier art schools. I can tell you that his dad and I are very proud of him and the exciting opportunities that lie ahead for him in the creative arts sector in our increasingly diverse province.

Though my residency in Highwood may be new, my family has a long history in Alberta. I was born and raised in Calgary by my parents, Doug and Sharon Smith. I know my parents are proud of me, but I'm equally proud of them. Mom and Dad married as teenagers, and times for them were tough. They lived in subsidized housing for a while, but they worked incredibly hard.

They paid their own way through school, they bought a home in Calgary, they lost a home during the days of the national energy program, and they somehow managed to raise five kids. I suppose we were poor although we didn't feel poor. I thought everybody in grade 6 wore their brothers' hand-me-down cords.

My first job was pushing a cart at a bingo parlour. Then I worked at McDonald's before climbing the ladder in the restaurant business from busgirl to hostess to waitress and eventually to supervisor, earning my way through university – two degrees – with less than \$10,000 in student loan debt.

Now, I don't think that my experience is all that much different from most Albertans'. Hard work certainly is a common story in my family. All of my great-grandparents arrived in Alberta at the turn of the last century, coming from England, Ireland, the United States, and the Ukraine to get here. Some of the original people who settled in Alberta, east of here, just north of Lloydminster, were my own ancestors on my mum's side, the Hawkinses.

Back in the 1800s, before they moved here, they were homesteading on the Kansas plains. My great-great-grandmother was Mary Crow. She was a member of the Cherokee Nation, that had been forcibly relocated to Kansas from the southeastern United States in the 1830s by the U.S. government, a terrible stain on the history of America known as the Trail of Tears.

On my dad's side we came from the Ukraine. My great-granddad was Philipus Kolodnicki from Galicia, but when he got to Canada, some immigration bureaucrat renamed him Philip Smith. I guess it was easier to spell. That's how I became a Smith. The Hawkinses started farming, and Philip Smith worked as a CPR switchman.

It's good for us to remember those early people and those early times because it's those people and those times that stamped the Alberta character. It's good sometimes for us to consider why it is that they came here at such great sacrifice and risk. Was it for an easy life? Was it so someone else would take care of them? No, obviously not. They wanted to build a new society where they could take responsibility for themselves and build their own communities in their own ways. People like Philipus Kolodnicki wanted to be free from the stifling authoritarianism and extreme poverty of eastern Europe. People like Jim Hawkins from the plains of Bloody Kansas wanted to find a place that was unstained by the tragedies of human history, where he could find peace and prosperity. But they all came for what was once called the Last Best West, and they were determined to make the best of it.

It seems clear to me that this is why people always come to Alberta and why they keep on coming: to get ahead, to make a positive difference, to build anew, to contribute, to earn their own way, and to help others do the same. Somewhere, somehow – and it's been slowly over time – I think the present government has lost sight of this. I think that instead of helping Albertans get ahead as Albertans, their focus is now just on getting into government and staying in government. But this is why there's a Wildrose, and this is why I stand here today as Leader of the Official Opposition with a caucus of 17 MLAs, to start the process of giving Alberta back to Albertans.

My own journey into politics began in public policy research as an intern at the Fraser Institute, my first job out of university. I coauthored my first major paper on environmental policy, called *Environmental Indicators for Canada and the United States*. I coauthored my second major paper on environmental policy, on endangered species, when I was at the helm of the Canadian Property Rights Research Institute. My third coauthored paper on the environment, *Achieving Eco-prosperity*, was while I was at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as their Alberta director. In between I was elected to the Calgary board of

education as a trustee, had a career in print and broadcast journalism, and wrote thousands of articles on virtually every issue you can imagine as an editorial writer and columnist for the *Calgary Herald*. But property rights and their vital role in preserving both our environment and our economic freedom were themes I returned to again and again, and it's the main reason I'm now in politics.

My great ambition is for Alberta to lead the way in passing a constitutional amendment to entrench property rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When I am done my career in politics, it is my hope that section 7 of the Charter will state that everyone has the right to life, liberty, security of the person, the right to own and enjoy property, the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice, and nor shall private property be taken for public use without full, fair, and timely compensation.

My constituents will discover, if they haven't already, that I talk a lot about freedom. Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms enumerates the fundamental freedoms that are guaranteed in this country and in this province. The first fundamental freedom enumerated in the Charter is the freedom of conscience and religion. I would note that this freedom was deemed so important by Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the Charter's other drafters that it's right there at the top. The second fundamental freedom is the freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication. Third is freedom of peaceful assembly, and fourth is freedom of association.

We've begun to see dangerous warning signs in Alberta that our fundamental freedoms are at risk. If municipal leaders and school board officials can't speak out against the government out of fear that they might lose grants, where is the free speech? If parents can't teach their kids the tenets of their faith without fear of being hauled before a human rights commission, where is the freedom of religion? If landowners can't meet without having government spies in attendance, where is the freedom of association? If the government can retaliate against a popular artistic performance group by denying them the use of a government-owned facility, where is the freedom of assembly? The great challenge of our time is for us to re-embrace our fundamental freedoms. They were not granted to us by government, and they cannot be taken away from us by government. This is my mission in public life, and this is why I felt called to public service. For me that job begins now.

**4:00**

I'd like to thank the hon. Lieutenant Governor for his delivery of the Speech from the Throne. He's of course had to do double duty this year as this was his second speech over the space of a few short months. I will have more to say on this, but first I'd like to say a few more words about the constituency that I represent, my new home in Highwood, and the reasons why I chose to make it my home.

As I said before, Highwood is an extraordinary region, a great mixture of communities and industries, and it is this diversity that convinced me to make this the place that I wanted to represent. The constituency of Highwood has changed greatly since the previous election, in 2008. A few communities have been redistricted to other constituencies, including Eden Valley reserve. But as Aboriginal Relations critic I want to assure the residents of Eden Valley that I will be a strong representative for them and every other First Nations, Métis, and aboriginal Albertan.

The arbitrary cancelling of the First Nations refinery project and the lack of consultation on a host of issues has severely damaged this government's relationship with our First Peoples. It was a

surprise to me that the throne speech never made reference to how the government will help to alleviate poverty in aboriginal communities and ensure that they have full access to all of the economic opportunities that should be available to them as Albertans. I look forward to building this relationship and advocating on their behalf.

Highwood constituency has also changed owing to the booming growth of the town of Okotoks, a town that has doubled in size in the last 10 years. It faces the attendant challenges of managing growth pressures. Residents will be pleased to see the opening of the new south Calgary hospital, an easy distance for many commuters who make their living in neighbouring Calgary. The town this year faces a major decision on its growth, having bumped up against the limits of the Sheep River. This decision is expected to be made in the fall, and I look forward to assisting Okotoks council moving forward on it, whatever their decision may be.

High River and the MD of Foothills are working jointly on mapping the aquifer, which may help with a regional water solution. In any case, both of these municipalities as well face issues of managing growth. High River has annexed enough land to grow double its size in the coming years, and the MD is just finishing its growth planning study this year. I support the MD of Foothills in maintaining local autonomy to best serve its residents. I hope that as MLA I may play a role in assisting the Calgary Regional Partnership in making the Calgary metropolitan plan attractive enough for the MD to be a part of it but voluntarily. There is more work to do here.

Highwood is growing so fast that it can barely keep up. Like every municipality, the municipalities within Highwood desperately need a new funding model, one that respects them as another order of government and gives them the resources they need to address their own priorities. The highway needs upgrading. We have overcrowded schools, insufficient long-term care, water challenges. Much-needed flood mitigation is required, which brings me to George Groeneveld, the previous hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld was a great advocate for the region. He worked tirelessly to do what was best for the region, including to protect us from flooding, but his 2005 flood report has never been released. For the people of my constituency this is significant. The annual anxiety over late-spring floods is always overwhelming, and on Mr. Groeneveld's behalf I would like to ask this government to let us see his report. If some of the points are out of date, we understand, but we need to judge for ourselves. We need transparency.

I also want to issue a challenge to this Premier and her government, a challenge to think big, a commuter train system not just connecting the residents of my constituency to Calgary but also connecting those in similar-size communities to Edmonton and eventually to connect major centres with each other. Vancouver has the West Coast line using existing heavy rail lines. Ontario has the GO train system. How impossible can it be to connect High River to Okotoks to downtown Calgary to the airport to Airdrie and beyond using the existing CP Rail line? We don't have to reinvent the steel wheel. I urge our Transportation minister to go and take a look at existing services in other parts of Canada, and I am more than willing to work on starting a heavy rail pilot project to connect High River, Okotoks, and Calgary if he so desires.

Highwood is farming and ranching and forestry and oil and gas all around – I will talk more about that in a minute – but it is also a burgeoning enclave for arts and culture like so much of Alberta, visual artists like Brian Clute, Bob and Connie Pike as well as Arlene Western Evans and Stephen Evans to name just a few, and

the Museum of the Highwood, which recently opened after the terrible fire.

Some of our favourite movies were shot in the area: *Silver Streak*, *Superman*, and TV shows like *Heartland*. However, our film industry is hurting terribly. We need to fix the tax and funding structure now. One of the world's greatest movie horse wranglers, John Scott, runs his operation and makes his home in southern Alberta, and we want to keep him here.

Yes, Highwood is a wonderful area. I'm thrilled to live in a heritage house that is close to Guy Weadick's historic home, especially in this the hundredth-year anniversary of the Calgary Stampede.

Now, I would like to say a word about our major industries in Highwood and Alberta, focusing particularly on energy and the opportunities that I see that lie ahead. The "wood" in Highwood: well, we came by it honestly. The lumber industry was once a major economic driver in Highwood, much as it still is in other parts of the province. But just like a lot of Alberta industry, the lumber industry has grown and changed, and almost all the products are finished right here in Alberta. This is now a high-tech industry. Even for cutting lumber computers do the hard calculations on board length, angle of cut, and that means productivity is up, which benefits everyone. Take a primary industry like forestry, mix in technological expertise, and, presto, more efficient, more productive, value added.

This, you would think, takes a lot of energy. Of course it does, but this industry increasingly is turning to providing its own energy, converting pulp waste to power. The Canfor plant in Grande Prairie generates 23 megawatts of power, more than it can use, so it sells some of it back into the grid, with similar projects planned in High Level and Whitecourt. Now, that is Alberta innovation. Every viable source of energy needs to be developed so that Alberta is not just a leader in oil and gas but a leader in energy generation, period.

Highwood also sits square in ranching and farming country. The cattle industry is breathing a sigh of relief as prices seem to be recovering. In my riding Cargill provides work to Albertans and to foreign workers from Mexico and the Philippines. A diverse population, Highwood really is an authentic slice of Alberta. But there are storm clouds on the horizon. Overregulation in the slaughterhouse industry is strangling the smaller plants just as we need more capacity, not less. Addressing the issue of overregulation will be a priority for me.

As for farming, some Albertans may still have the image of the dusty, determined farmer working the field with a plow, but last year I climbed into the air-conditioned cab of a brand new combine. With the level of precision from the GPS technology the cab is a virtual office. A farmer can monitor markets and conduct business all around our wireless world and never stop combining.

We're not just corn and canola anymore. Schools like Lethbridge and Olds colleges teach cutting-edge plant science, irrigation, and water management strategies, and universities are working on the emerging technologies of converting agricultural products to plastics, pharmaceuticals, biofuels and more. Like forestry, agriculture is a high-tech industry and a growing player in a diversified energy market.

Of course, the Highwood riding used to include Turner Valley, the place our energy industry began. Alberta is an energy superpower thanks to that plus a century of technological wizardry, trial and error, and just plain hard work. If natural gas prices today are low, we need to look at that glass as half full, not a setback but an opportunity to convert as much of our energy use to this cleaner burning fuel as we can. Natural gas is up to 40 per cent cleaner than other hydrocarbon fuels, meaning we can grow

our economy while seriously reducing toxic emissions and greenhouse gases.

Remember, we didn't stop using whale oil because we ran out of whales. We didn't stop using wood stoves because we ran out of trees or coal furnaces because we ran out of coal. We simply switched to something cleaner and cheaper and more convenient. Tomorrow all hydrocarbons will seem as old as whale oil, but today we're doing it better and better.

The oil sands reserves are staggering. Our goal must be to continue to reduce our ecological footprint until the world wonders what all that environmental fuss was all about. The new technologies are equally astounding. As steam-assisted gravity drainage gets more and more efficient, industry is experimenting with thermal-assisted gravity drainage, meaning no open pits, no fresh water, no tailings ponds, no leakage into drinking water, lower emissions, and, of course, no dead ducks. The early results are promising, a miracle of engineering that the world will one day come to celebrate because no matter your level of concern, no matter how green you want to be, we all still drive, we fly, we love our iPads or our BlackBerries, everything. Everything and everyone relies on petrochemicals in every facet of every life every single day.

#### 4:10

Our bigger threat is that over here we're producing all this energy and cleaner than ever before because over there various groups fight a proxy battle against Alberta's oil sands. It makes no sense. Pipelines have been crisscrossing this continent for years and years with almost negligible negative impact. When did pipelines become the enemy? Compared to trucking or rail or tankers from the Middle East, pipelines have always been considered one of the safest, cleanest means of transport. Today's fully monitored, state-of-the-art lines bring that risk closer to zero than ever before. Of the countries that produce that Middle East oil, well, many are regimes that no one should ever have to deal with. Yes, with pipelines of course we should proceed with care, but letting single-minded groups shut our oil in through a proxy environmental battle based on emotion, not based on fact, is an attack on our prosperity, our future, and on each of us, and we need leadership.

The Canadian Energy Research Institute calculates that over the next 20 years the rest of Canada will see \$100 billion in GDP growth, 1.6 million person-years of new employment, and \$17 billion in new tax revenues, all of that outside of Alberta but only if we can get the oil to market. I hope the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood plans to share this information with the leader of the federal Official Opposition when he visits Alberta this week.

As I continue to monitor the ongoing debate about what we do in Alberta, what is clear is that a war is being waged on our product, and it is in the interests of every Albertan to do everything we can to protect it. I want to take action, but I want the action to be reasonable. Rather than throwing \$2 billion at the unproven effectiveness of burying carbon dioxide or slowing growth with carbon taxes on consumers, a tax on something that no one chooses to use, let's put a fraction of that \$2 billion on rebates or incentives for hybrid vehicles or fleet conversions to natural gas and renovations to improve energy efficiency of homes and buildings. It will do so much more to reduce our environmental footprint, and it won't penalize anybody.

We can change the way we use energy. Technology never sleeps. Look at our phones. We used to call you old if you once used a party line. Now you're considered ancient if you still use a land line. From wind to solar to biomass to geothermal to

localized natural gas the way we can generate heat and electricity changes every single day.

But this government is still bent on building \$16 billion worth of transmission lines we may never need to access a market that may never exist, transmission lines consumers have to pay for and landowners have to live with whether they like it or not. The government's electricity plan is more than four years old, and the emergence of shale gas has rendered it ridiculously out of date. That's one of the reasons why there are 17 Wildrose MLAs here in the Legislature. The government should never forget that 56 per cent of all voters did not support returning this government to power.

Now, I'd like to finish today on a happy note, but I can't. The government's throne speech shows that it mistakenly believes that it continues to have a mandate to spend its way into oblivion, to continue draining our savings, risking our future, and plunging us deeper into deficit as though this kind of reckless spending has no impact on key government services for families, seniors, and the vulnerable. To start a throne speech with this statement, "Economic recovery is under way in many parts of the world" greatly concerns me. The world economy is once again teetering on a precipice. The turmoil in Greece and Italy threatens the euro zone, and that in turn threatens us all.

Over the last 10 years we have seen gross mismanagement by this government papered over by heavy resource dollars covering up bad decision after bad decision, and there is no defence for being unaware of the world's economic challenges. We are not crying wolf. Oil and gas prices are already below government predictions. Every \$1 drop in the price of oil adds more than \$220 million to our deficit. If numbers continue on their current trend, we will face an additional shortfall of \$2 billion – that's 2,000 times \$1 million – on top of the deficit already budgeted. This kind of short-sighted and irresponsible management is, unfortunately, the hallmark of the current government.

They like to say that they've provided good stewardship of our vast resource wealth in the four-plus decades they've been around, but here's the truth. Since 1971, the year the PCs came to power, the Alberta government has taken in roughly \$315 billion in resource revenue. Think about that number for just a second, \$315 billion. That's \$315 billion that other provinces don't have and would long for. Properly managed, this unparalleled level of wealth could carry Alberta's top-notch public services through booms and busts with no impact on the people who rely on them. What a vision. What potential we have in this province. What potential this government has squandered.

Peter Lougheed knew of this potential. He knew Alberta was uniquely positioned to capitalize on a resource other provinces could only dream of to ensure long-term prosperity for every generation that follows his. Like a true visionary, he set forth a plan to make that happen. He called it the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Four decades and hundreds of billions of dollars after Lougheed envisioned it, the heritage fund is actually worth less today in real terms than when he started it up in 1976. What should have been the envy of Canada and the model of forward-looking, responsible government stands today as a powerful symbol of this government's outright abuse of the wealth we are so fortunate to have and a relic of a bygone leadership that wanted to harness the future for our children instead of squandering it on themselves in the present.

Under this new Premier this so-called new government shows no signs of shifting course. During the election campaign the Premier took electioneering to new heights, promising some \$7 billion in new spending on top of what's already committed in Budget 2012. I can only hope she knows that there is no way to

keep her promises and balance the books this year or the year after or the year after that and so changes course before it's too late. I predict we are not going to see a balanced budget in 2012 or 2013 or 2014 or 2015. I hope I'm wrong, but I fear I'm not. There is only one silver lining. If it goes as badly as I'm afraid it will, Albertans at least will be able to choose a new government in 2016.

Alberta can be great again. Part of what made us great was our resolve to keep our books in order. We know – or at least we knew – that everything springs from our prosperity. Because we have this wealth and because we balance the budget and because we manage our dollars wisely, we can provide for Albertans the very best of everything. This is why our prosperity needs to be managed with a firm hand but a caring hand. We don't adhere to these fiscal values out of ideological purity or some other sense of intellectual obligation. We adhere to them because they work. We will fight for them because of that, and we will oppose the approach this government continues to take, the one that's being discredited across the world before our very eyes.

This government says that they'll decrease regulation, but they've only ever done the opposite. They say that we have a strong public service when what we really have is a top-heavy bureaucracy and not enough workers on the front lines. They promised endless program increases and now promise no new taxes to pay for them. Well, we don't want higher taxes either. So what does this mean? The promises are empty, or our pockets are empty. They vow to increase family care clinics in spite of the fact that doctors are begging them to reconsider. They promise more continuing care centres, as this government has for 20 years with so little success. How is it that we can believe them now?

They don't promise greater transparency; they offer a new minister charged with reviewing it. Well, here we can save them some time and effort: more transparency, period. They promise they will survey the possibility of whistle-blower legislation. Well, again, make it easy. Just introduce it. They promise to develop our natural resources responsibly, but they seem to forget it's private industry that develops our natural resources. Oversight? That's something altogether different. A better relationship with Ottawa sounds good, but does Alberta really need a consulate within its own country, or is this more of the same patronage from the party who wrote the book on it?

We have another four years of PC government for a variety of reasons except for one. No one believes they will actually get this province's books in order. No one believes that we'll return to being fiscally responsible. No one believes this government will stop looking past its own nose at a future they have consistently ignored. Everyone hopes, but no one believes.

With all of their election promises, remember that they can't just stick their heads in the sand, even in the oil sands. Those sands are deep, but even they are not a bottomless pit of money. Yes, this government has a mandate, but there are also NDs and Liberals and a bunch of Wildrosers that do, too. We are here, and we are watching on behalf of all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Hon. members, section 29(2)(a) is now available. Just to remind some and perhaps introduce the concept to others, it means that there are five minutes allocated now during which time you can ask the previous speaker a question or you may make a comment on the previous speaker's issues that she relayed to this Assembly. Either way, there are five minutes available.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a question for the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, and it relates to her comments regarding the fact that there were tens of billions of dollars squandered over many, many years. Instead of being saved, they were spent on various expenditures. Would the hon. leader not concede that one reason we have very low taxes, the lowest overall taxes in the country, is the fact that we have not squandered that money, but we kept the taxes low to pay for a very, very high quality of social services, a high quality of health care, a high quality of education, and many of the other programs? Are there specific areas which the hon. leader would suggest that we shouldn't have spent money on or that we should have increased taxes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. opposition leader.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for that question. I think that what you will have seen, that we have argued in the past – certainly, the hon. Member for Airdrie has said that part of the way you get your spending under control is that you put in place a year-over-year spending limitation law so that rather than seeing your year-over-year spending go up by 8 or 9 or 10 per cent, it goes up by a more reasonable 2 or 3 or 4 per cent. If we had put this policy in place as recently as 2007, we would not be running a deficit at all this year. We'd actually be running a surplus.

I was interested to see that we hold the same view as the president and spokesperson for the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, Guy Smith. I was talking to Mr. Smith about the problem that we have of bureaucracy and multiple layers of middle management. He relayed a story to me from back in the 1990s. He said that the front-line workers were actually not all that upset when the previous Premier, Mr. Klein, had come through with some of those cuts to programming because what it meant was that they cut out layer and layer and layer of middle management. In those days, back in the 1990s, he tells me, there used to be one manager for every 16 front-line workers. Today, he tells me, there's one manager for every three front-line workers. These managers, multiple layers – six, seven, eight layers in the case of health care, as we hear – are the reasons why resources are not getting directed to the front line.

I can give you an example from some of our own research that we did looking at the Alberta health superboard. The Alberta health superboard in 2009 began a hiring spree of senior managers, administrators all making over \$100,000 a year, who do not do one hour of front-line services. We have seen an increase of 500 of these senior managers in two years, from 2009 to 2011.

If I'm being asked where it is that we would find the savings, that's where we would begin, and we'd do it compassionately. We understand that people who have contributed their entire lives to the public service, building their careers in the public service, deserve to be respected for that. We have an opportunity to be able to move to a leaner public service model, much as this government used to believe in back in the 1990s, identify a new management structure, and then as those managers start retiring through attrition, through natural retirement, you just don't replace them. Ultimately, you move back to the kind of model where you're able to redirect those resources to the front lines, put out a target, have one manager for every 16 front-line workers. I think what you would then see is that the members on this side, I think Albertans, and I think also the front-line public service providers would be very pleased at the level of service that they're able to provide to taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to take up 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to first of all congratulate the new Member for Highwood and Leader of the Official Opposition. I was edified by your speech and learned a lot, really, I guess, that I didn't know about your past. One thing that intrigued me the most perhaps is that you had spoken about conservative values, and I think you've spoken previously about being a conservative or even a member of the Conservative Party. I think your story kind of reflects what happened to many hundreds of thousands of people in Alberta over this last election that chose not to vote for the Conservative Party. Was there a point, a place where you could no longer abide by the Progressive Conservative Party and chose a different path?

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. member, we'll have to wait for an answer to that at another time.

Are there other speakers to the motion regarding the throne speech? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and leader of the Liberal opposition.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to give my response to the Premier's third throne speech in seven months, but first I'd like to begin by giving congratulations and thanks. I'd like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your selection and every elected member in this Legislature that's elected to serve this great province.

I'd also like to thank the constituents of Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-McCall, Calgary-Mountain View, and, of course, the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre and all of those who elected 100 per cent of the incumbent Liberal MLAs. I'd like to thank all Liberal candidates and their families and their teams and volunteers for having the courage to keep Liberal values alive in this great province. I'd like to thank all of those on our team who helped to prepare the most visionary and courageous and honest common-sense plan to address the issues important to Albertans.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Of course, I would like to thank the constituents of Edmonton-Meadowlark for their confidence in giving me the opportunity to serve them for the second election. As you know, we had a landslide victory by 118 votes, and I look forward to working hard on their behalf again. Edmonton-Meadowlark is the constituency of Speaker Gerry Amerongen; Senator Grant Mitchell, also past Alberta Liberal Party leader; Karen Leibovici, municipal councillor in Edmonton; Mr. Bob Maskell; Mr. Maurice Tougas.

A lot of good things happen in Edmonton-Meadowlark. We've got West Edmonton Mall, a lot of industry, a lot of hard-working families. We've got a lot of wise Albertans who are living the golden years of their lives, a lot of immigrants, and many very good schools.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has happened since I was first elected in 2008. In my personal life my daughter graduated from Harry Ainlay high school, attended Faculté Saint-Jean, and now is in second year at the University of Alberta. My son is graduating this year from Strathcona high school. You know, during that time God felt it was time to take my father home, and my mother enjoys the twilight years of her life, living a happy, healthy life with her family.

As you know, for me it's been quite an interesting four years in public service. I've had the opportunity to serve in government,

serve as an independent member, serve as Leader of the Official Opposition, and now as leader of the second opposition party.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get back to the throne speech. Now, after three throne speeches one would expect a semblance of a coherent vision for our province to have been articulated. This is a great province, and we deserve greatness from our leaders. The third time is the charm, right? Well, sadly, no, it's not, not in this case. I believe we deserve better. Once again we've sat through a throne speech filled with platitudes, bromides, and slogans. The third throne speech, it must be said, was little more than an exercise in filling the air with sound signifying pretty much nothing.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, we have deficits in this province. We can't balance the fiscal books or the social books with oil at a hundred bucks a barrel. If we can't do it today, when are we going to balance these books?

In a visionary document we need solutions to problems. We have deficits. We have a structural deficit. Let's talk about this. There was no meaningful mention of the structural deficit that this government has created. Was there a mention? No, not at all. As a logical result of that submission, there was no meaningful mention of how this problem might be solved.

In the absence of seriousness on the government's part we would like to offer some solutions to this problem because I believe that part of opposition is not only to critique; it's to offer solutions, pragmatic, common-sense solutions. For starters, I encourage the Premier to introduce a fair tax which would see no increase in the rates paid by 90 per cent of Albertans but would see those with taxable incomes of more than \$100,000 a year pay their fair share. In fact, it would see us paying a little bit more, just our fair share, not too much. This change alone would bring in approximately \$850 million in additional revenue.

I also encourage the Premier to raise the corporate tax rate so that the largest companies also pay their fair share. An increase of just two points, from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, would bring in at least \$650 million. It's okay to make a buck in this province. Business is a good thing. All we're asking for is two extra cents. That's it. Two extra cents from every buck. It isn't much. Mr. Speaker, is this really so hard? One point five billion dollars just like that. Why the Premier is afraid to talk about such matters is a mystery because that's what leadership is about: having the courage to talk about tough issues.

Just these two measures alone would make it possible to end this government's practice of spending all of our resource revenue as quickly as our royalty checks roll in. We could finally start saving some of these resource revenues and investing the interest to benefit all Albertans for the future. Our decisions need to be made through the lens of what's best for not just our children but our grandchildren and our unborn great-grandchildren.

On the topic of resource revenues here's a novel idea that would both provide an incentive for companies to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide they release into the atmosphere and bring in additional revenue. Let's put a real price on carbon. We've got a problem – absolutely – perceived and real. It's long past time to move from levying based on intensity emissions to a carbon levy based on actual emissions. Phasing in a carbon levy based on actual emissions over a four-year period would encourage industry to reduce emissions, and industry would do the job. They are doing a lot of good work already, but I believe they can do better. They believe they can do better.

This will go a long way to restoring our environmental reputation locally and internationally, safeguarding the oil sands and our

economy and all of our valuable social programs in the long run. It would also bring in \$1.8 billion a year after the four-year phase-in is complete, money which could be used for both green transportation and to create a green technology fund to make Alberta a leader in environmentally responsible oil and gas extraction. Once again, why the Premier is afraid to discuss the revenues is a mystery. It just takes a little bit of vision and a little bit of courage.

Mr. Speaker, this province is about family and communities. Let's talk about communities. A discussion of eliminating our structural deficit is not the only thing missing from the throne speech. Any mention of ways to help our communities is also missing, but here are some suggestions. The first one can be done very quickly and easily. Let's work with the cities of Edmonton and Calgary to draft city charters so that they will have the powers they need to tackle their own unique challenges. Albertans are smart. Let's put power back in the hands of the people. Edmonton and Calgary are truly international cities. Allow their leaders to make local decisions. This is long overdue and would generate a lot of goodwill.

We can also call on the government to establish a new municipal heritage fund, which would begin providing and creating stable, sustainable funding to local governments and creating long-term infrastructure solutions. Good infrastructure is an economic enabler. Let's use the interest from this heritage fund to support neighbourhood associations. Direct funding to neighbourhood associations across the province with 25 per cent of the municipal heritage fund's earnings would enable citizens to turn their neighbourhood priorities into realities. With a \$1.5 billion investment into the municipal heritage fund every year and a 5 per cent rate of return on the investment, the average neighbourhood of 4,000 people would receive \$300,000 a year in 15 years. Four thousand people. That's like a small town. This sure sounds better than the current practice of squandering our resource revenues and of pork-barrel politics.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about transportation. Here's another good idea we encourage the members opposite to steal. Invest half of the \$1.8 billion a year raised by the new emissions-based carbon levy I mentioned earlier in green transportation. This money should be distributed on a per capita basis to benefit every community in this province, from the largest to the smallest. It's the people's land. It's their resources. It's their money. Let's give it to them to do what they need to do. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary are saying that they need new LRT lines, and \$300 million each year from a carbon levy based on actual emissions would sure help. This would greatly help both cities to develop green transportation options such as LRT. Allow the municipalities to do what they feel is best for them. Not only would this help communities throughout the province to improve public transportation; it would result in real reductions in emissions.

Mr. Speaker, what about health care? Did you know that we have too many managers managing managers managing managers and not enough front-line staff? I'll tell you. I still work in the system. Every front-line staff will tell you that this government doesn't know what they're doing. A case in point is AHS's third-quarter report that we brought up today, that they didn't release prior to the election. It's a wreck. It's a failure in every major indicator of their own standards that they're not meeting. We're the biggest spending health care system in the country. Albertans deserve better, and I believe we can give them better. Here again, meaningful discussion is missing, so let's once again offer some solutions.

Earlier in my remarks I showed some ways that government can increase tax revenues by at least 1 and a half billion dollars with just a little bit of political courage. As it happens, we also have a good idea for investing some of this new revenue, investments which could fix a broken health care system. The best place to start is actually with home care. Let's call on this government to double the funding for home care so that our seniors can stay in their homes for as long as possible and in their own communities. It's where they want to be, and it's where we should help them stay. Doubling the funding for home care, to \$808 million a year, gets us there. This stops seniors from coming into hospital in the first place and gets them out of hospital if they do get sick and come into hospital.

We also call on this government to increase the supply of publicly funded and publicly delivered nonprofit long-term care beds for those whose needs exceed what can be provided at home. The evidence is in, Mr. Speaker. Private, for-profit long-term care does not serve our seniors well because when you add the profit component, cost plus profit equals price. The price of this health care gets you much less health care and a lesser quality of health care. That's the evidence internationally and locally. For-profit long-term care is inferior, and it's more expensive. Long-term care is increasingly too expensive for too many of our seniors. It's okay for the rich guys to get their stuff, but let's face it: most Albertan seniors aren't rich. They're average, middle-class, hard-working Albertans.

Where do seniors who need affordable long-term care end up when government doesn't provide it? They end up in the hospital, taking up a bed that's for sick or injured people. This is why seniors are being warehoused in acute-care beds when they don't even need to be in the hospital in the first place. We've got a paramedic over there. He understands this. It's unnecessary for it to be this way, it's morally wrong for it to be this way, and it's economically wasteful for it to be this way.

This is Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Let's please abandon this failed approach to long-term care. Let's invest \$180 million over the next five years to build publicly funded, publicly delivered long-term care spaces for our seniors, especially for low- and middle-income seniors.

Let's invest \$90 million over the next six years to cover the additional operating costs. This is what it takes to ensure an adequate supply of affordable, nonprofit long-term care beds. The bonus is that hundreds of acute-care beds occupied by seniors today waiting for long-term care or home care will become available. This means patients can be moved up from the ER department in a timely fashion. This means an end to – guess what? – agonizingly long waits to be admitted into the emergency room. This means ambulances no longer sit idle. It means an end to dangerously long wait times when you call 911 when your life is in danger and an end to red alerts. Surely to goodness all of this is worth \$270 million over six years.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, let's put the word "care" back into health care. That's all we need to do. It's what Albertans deserve. Or do we want to build and operate more hospitals instead of properly using the ones we currently have? For a government claiming it's ready to strike the right balance between progressive and conservative thinking, this should be a no-brainer. Unfortunately, this government has been neither progressive nor conservative.

What about education? Again, there's no meaningful mention of this rather important area, so let's once again offer some solutions. Let's get rid of school fees. It's a regressive tax on working families. Let's lower tuition and make education affordable and

accessible for every child. This regressive tax exists because this government doesn't fund education properly. We call on this government to invest an extra \$103 million a year in public education so that school fees can be eliminated. That's only a little bit of money. It's not that much. Alberta is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and wealth, but our greatest wealth and resource is our children, our people. Let's invest in them. The returns are immense in the long term. We can afford this, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, it's true that I have found this third speech in seven months to be a bit lacking, but I want to be a bit more positive. I don't want to end my remarks with criticism. I'd like to extend an offer to this government. Show the courage to address the structural deficit by introducing fair taxes so that we can save and invest in resource revenues. Fair taxation, a price on carbon, health care, education, infrastructure: these are economic enablers. Let's fix these issues. We will fully support you. Every single member of the Alberta Liberal caucus will support you. Let's stop running from the problems facing this province and have courage. Let's turn away from the old ways of doing things, which have been shown not to work. Show the courage to do the things that need to be done, and we will support you. That's a promise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. God bless Alberta. God bless Canada. God bless you.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. Under 29(2)(a) I'd like to ask the member if there was any other group of people in Alberta that he felt had been missed or trivialized during the election and in the speeches that he would like to address now?

**Dr. Sherman:** I'd like to thank the hon. member from the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. In fact, Mr. Speaker, my disappointment is that this is such a great province, such a diverse province – we are people from all over the planet – and there are many people that were left out. The most important were the original immigrants to this nation from 10,000 years ago, the indigenous peoples of this province. They face and we as a province face a crisis. While there are some who enjoy so much prosperity in this province, there are some who do not have the opportunity to participate. The indigenous peoples of this great province I believe deserve not only mention but deserve solutions to the problems. How are they going to participate in the economy, in the prosperity when the high school completion rate is so low and the young people in the aboriginal communities can't get the skills and education they need? How can they participate?

Health care, the suicide rate, the mental health rate, the obesity rate, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease. When there's no access to care, how can you participate in the economy? Education and health care are not just social issues; they are actually economic enablers, but more importantly they enable people to live amazing, amazing fruitful lives.

There wasn't much for immigrants, for new Canadians. I can tell you that I came to this nation as a six-year-old. I didn't speak English. My parents were immigrants. My older brothers didn't speak English. It's challenging as a new Canadian, whether you're from Europe or Asia or Africa or South America. It doesn't matter where you're from; it's challenging when you're here in a fast-paced province like Alberta. You don't speak the language. It's pretty cold here, Mr. Speaker.

You know, you've got so many brilliant, educated people from across the planet working way beneath their abilities and capabilities. Invest in new immigrant settlement policies, English as a second language. Let's offer more government services and more languages beyond just English because that's how we connect with one another as a people.

There wasn't enough about seniors, those who built this great province. We have a lot of seniors coming up.

There wasn't enough about our children, how we're going to educate them. We have a 30 per cent high school dropout rate – did you know that, Mr. Speaker? – a 30 per cent high school noncompletion rate, the lowest postsecondary participation rate in the wealthiest, most prosperous province on the planet. Did you know that? It's an absolute tragedy.

That's why our greatest resource, my dear friends, is our people, our children. Let's address these problems. These solutions weren't there. There are many who don't enjoy their prosperity. This world can sometimes, many times, be an unjust and unfair place. Our duty is to make it a just and fair place. That is our duty. Not just to make the rich get richer; it's to make it fair for all people. Create policy that allows amazing things to happen, and then the individual has the responsibility of taking that opportunity. Yes, I believe in responsibility – individual, personal, community, and governmental responsibility – but individuals cannot seize that opportunity if we don't create an atmosphere for it.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you very much. I could go on forever. I love this province. I love the people who built this province. We will continue with passion and heart and vigour to support the government when they are right, to offer solutions when they're sort of right, and, hey – you know what? – to sock it to them when we think they're really off base.

Thank you very much. God bless you all.

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

Are there others on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

If not, then I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on the motion.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your post, which I'm sure you are going to fulfill with great dignity.

I appreciate this opportunity to respond to the throne speech that his Honour the Lieutenant Governor delivered last Thursday. Mr. Speaker, what was apparent to me during the recent election and what I think is now obvious to many is that the government has run through whatever credibility they might once have had. When the Conservatives won their majority government on April 23, the results said little or nothing about the government itself, its record, or its platform. What it did say was that Albertans didn't want to be governed by a group of people who deny climate change and who don't see a problem with discrimination against people based on race or sexual orientation. The election was not trust in the PCs; it was about fear of the Wildrose.

Mr. Speaker, that was April 23. Today we begin the process of understanding our place in this 28th Legislature, and I think it's more important than ever that the government listen to Albertans and, as well, to the other parties here in this Legislature because they, too, represent Albertans.

The message that the government is offering Albertans is sounding increasingly hollow. The message of pragmatic, responsible government is laughable when compared with this government's record on a wide range of issues. The prosperity that people think of when they think of Alberta is not reaching many in

our society. People realized in this election that what we have in this government is not leadership; it's not thoughtful or pragmatic governance; it's nothing more than a desire for power that keeps this government running. I think Albertans deserve more than that.

The throne speech, Mr. Speaker, was empty beyond my expectations. But in one way I think the emptiness of the Speech from the Throne represents an emptiness in the government's vision for this province. Although there was little vision in the speech about moving our energy sector forward, either in terms of environmental monitoring or a plan for sustainable development, nothing about creating an affordable market for electricity or even about making life affordable for families at all, I think that's just part and parcel of a government which is out of touch with ordinary Alberta families.

4:50

The government has been pursuing an energy strategy based primarily on pipelines to export unprocessed bitumen instead of creating jobs for Albertans by upgrading our resources here. Before the government moved to support the Keystone pipeline as heavily as they have done, there were a number of major upgrading projects approved for the heartland area. These were billion-dollar projects that would have created thousands of jobs and drawn investment to our province. Now, Mr. Speaker, those jobs are apparently lost for the time being. That was a direct result of this government's decision to favour the interests of oil companies over the interests of ordinary Alberta families.

This throne speech was full of evidence that this government does not have the priorities of ordinary families of this province in mind. While the Conservatives move to deliver more care to our seniors through a private model, hundreds and hundreds of seniors can't afford decent long-term care. While the Conservatives insist that private care for seniors provides good care at lower cost to taxpayers, workers from one of these private facilities are now on strike because their for-profit employer refuses to pay them a fair wage or even the industry standard. We heard talk of both of these things in the throne speech, where the government admitted that they still need to design and implement a plan for seniors' care and accommodation. Mr. Speaker, they've had 41 years to do so, and they're only beginning to design a plan now.

There's a serious crisis in this area, Mr. Speaker, and this creates a ripple effect through the entire health care system. Seniors can't find appropriate or affordable care, so they're forced to live in hospital wards while they wait for a suitable bed to open up. Meanwhile the government talks about improving wait times in hospitals, and it seems that they're announcing a new strategy for how to deal with that every other week. Having a plan for taking care of seniors is the first and the most important step to solving problems in our hospitals. Our wait times are unacceptable, we have a shortage of family doctors and other health care professionals, and all of this is a result of poor planning for our seniors.

We cannot trust this government's vision for education, Mr. Speaker, either. When school boards lost \$107 million in funding in the last year, it was pressure of parents, teachers, school boards, and the NDP that forced the Premier to call a fall sitting of the Legislature and restore that funding. But we are still short hundreds of teachers in the system that were there before these cuts took place. Across Alberta schools are overcrowded and infrastructure is crumbling. We're a long way from where we should be in that regard, and I think Albertans deserve a government that will strengthen our public education system and will commit to making postsecondary education accessible to all.

This throne speech contained a lot of claims about the economic freedom of Alberta. In fact, the speech referred to Alberta as “the most economically free jurisdiction in North America.” But if economically free means the lowest minimum wage and workers dying because of lax safety regulations, that’s not freedom for the average Albertan.

Mr. Speaker, everywhere – from the price of electricity to seniors’ care to minimum wages – this government has their friends in private industry in mind and not the individual families who pay the price every day when the government doesn’t stand up for them. What Albertans need from their government isn’t a focus on creating excess profits for their friends in the oil and gas industry but a plan for ensuring that all Albertans get a fair share of the prosperity of our province. That plan needs to include how you pay for our public services.

Simply saying “no new taxes” over and over again without any other plan to deliver the services that Albertans need isn’t good enough. Giving Albertans the worst return in the world on our oil and gas resources isn’t good enough. Smart and good government means making the tough calls sometimes, Mr. Speaker, and that includes looking at all of our options, including making sure that the wealthiest individuals and corporations pay their fair share and making sure that our royalty rates are delivering a fair return to the people who own those resources, the people of Alberta.

Albertans need the health care system that they deserve, and we need an education system that has the best teachers but also the best schools and infrastructure.

Where this throne speech did focus on taking care of ordinary Albertans – for example, increases to AISH, the independence of the Child and Youth Advocate, and providing access to child care for middle- and low-income families – those were all in response to pressure from Albertans and from the NDP. Increases for AISH always have taken too long, and it’s usually only in response to a great deal of pressure and many reminders that people with disabilities deserve to live with some dignity that this government ever takes action on this issue. And there is so much more to be done for Albertans with disabilities. This government should index AISH to the cost of living because a decent amount of money one year is a pittance five years later.

Similar to the increases for AISH recipients the government wants to take credit in this throne speech for the independence of the Child and Youth Advocate. Usually, Mr. Speaker, a throne speech talks about what the government will do. This throne speech is perhaps unique in focusing on things that have already been done. That maybe gives them something to put in the speech. But it was the work of my colleague Rachel Notley, who repeatedly embarrassed this government until they took action, that gave . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Oh, I apologize. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Carry on.

**Mr. Mason:** I should know better. [interjections] Yeah.

Once again, taking action on something once it has become a thoroughgoing embarrassment to Albertans and to our province is not good enough and certainly isn’t something to be proud of.

So what can we see in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker? A government whose main achievements are directly attributable to pressure from the NDP. Let me assure you that that pressure will continue. We’ll work hard to raise the issues that matter to

Albertans and that this government has forgotten about. We’ll continue to talk about issues that others don’t, like giving Albertans a fair share of resource revenue, cleaning up the environment, cleaning up the tailings ponds, regulating the industry so the spills like the one on Friday near Rainbow Lake don’t happen. We’ll keep talking about fully public health care and good seniors’ care. We’ll keep talking about caring for vulnerable Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we can also see in this Speech from the Throne that the government has run out of steam. They don’t have much to offer Albertans. They don’t have a really compelling vision for the future of this province. This government needs a strong, a vocal opposition more than they ever have, and it’s clear that the government cannot move forward unless it listens to the opposition, consults with the opposition, and is prepared to take ideas from the opposition. Whether or not they give us credit is another matter.

It’s clear from the results of the election and clear from this throne speech, Mr. Speaker, that this government has much to do. Unfortunately, we don’t see in the throne speech a guide to the future of the province. I mentioned today in question period the government’s sweeping commitment to end child poverty in this province made when they were far behind in the polls in the election, when they were desperate for votes. They talked about reducing poverty in the province overall. They talked about eliminating child poverty altogether. Yet that was completely missing from the throne speech. Why would such a sweeping goal not be included in the Speech from the Throne? It’s either not really a goal of the government, or the Speech from the Throne doesn’t reflect the government’s plans, and that itself, I think, says volumes about this government.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I just want to say that I believe that Alberta has a great deal of promise. I think the future of this province could be wonderful, it could be bright, and it could be inclusive. It can include all Albertans, give everyone a share in the prosperity of our province. That should be the goal of the government. I wish that I saw that in the Speech from the Throne, but I do not. But it will remain our goal. It will be something that we will talk about, we will advocate for and work towards for the entire term of this Legislature. I look forward to working with any members and any parties who share those goals with us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. To the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – where did Beverly go? Is it totally gone out of that?

**Mr. Mason:** Deron has got it.

**Ms Blakeman:** Oh, Deron has got it.

I’m wondering if the member has any particular advice that he would like to direct the government’s way or perhaps expand on the advice that he’s already laid out in his remarks.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you for that very broad, very general – I don’t know where to start in terms of advice for this government.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, at least it’s not in question period.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Well, puffballs are not entirely a preserve of the government, I suppose. But I thank you very much.

5:00

My advice is to recognize what the election was and what the election result was. The Progressive Conservative Party in the election worked very hard to frighten Albertans about another alternative that was out there, and many people voted for them on that basis. They should not take that as a mandate to do whatever they want. They shouldn't take that as a mandate even to implement fully their platform without consultation with other parties in this Legislature and without discussion and consultation with the people of Alberta.

I think the question of the government's mandate is extremely important as we begin our work of the next four years in this Legislature. I've already heard it said: well, we have a mandate to do, you know, exactly what we want or exactly what we promised. I don't think that the government does. Most broadly, this government mandate is to govern with an appreciation of the science of climate change and to not be homophobic or racist. That's about as far as it goes for much of the government's support.

I would say that the answer is to take into account that many thousands of Albertans voted for parties other than this government and that it would be useful and interesting and productive if the government took time to consult with the other parties in this Legislature as we craft a vision for the future of this province, a vision which I think is noticeably lacking in this Speech from the Throne.

Thank you for the question, hon. member.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say, hon. member, that I'm happy to see you again here, elected. I really am.

Your comments with regard to the Wildrose, inferring that we are in any way racist or homophobic, are absolutely out of line . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair, please. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about the government's scare tactics and not necessarily any reflection on any other party. That is, in fact, the government's tactics, which they used to win the election. I didn't comment on whether it was accurate or not.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there other members?

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Motions

(continued)

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

### MLA Compensation Review

11. Mr. Hancock moved:

- A. Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in principle the recommendations of the Review of Compensation of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, "the report," submitted by the Hon. J.C. Major, CC,

QC, and refer the report to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, "the committee," for implementation where possible by June 30, 2012, subject to the following exceptions:

- (a) that recommendation 4 regarding salary for the Premier not be implemented but that the committee implement a salary that reflects a differential of plus 25 per cent between the Premier's salary and that of a minister with portfolio;
  - (b) that recommendation 10 concerning the expense portion of a member's remuneration, known as the tax-free allowance, not be implemented and that the amount of that expense allowance be set at zero pending an amendment to the Legislative Assembly Act to eliminate it;
  - (c) that recommendation 11 regarding the implementation of a new transition allowance be rejected and that no further amounts shall be accumulated beyond those accrued by eligible members prior to the commencement of the 28th Legislature;
  - (d) that the committee examine alternatives to the pension plan for members proposed in recommendation 12 and discussed in section 3.5 of the report, including defined contribution plans, and report to the Assembly with its recommendations;
- B. Be it resolved that nothing in this motion shall limit the committee's ability to report to the Assembly on any other matter arising from the report.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a fairly comprehensive report from the Hon. J.C. Major, CC, QC. I think it's important in that our Premier fulfilled her promise very quickly after being elected leader last fall in requesting the Speaker to move ahead with an independent report on MLA compensation and that the Speaker, after consulting the Members' Services Committee, moved ahead on that process.

Now, this is something that had come up much earlier in the House. In fact, I believe there was a unanimous resolution passed by the House somewhat earlier, brought forward by the Member for Lethbridge-East. I think there was some discussion on that resolution, but there was some, shall I say, inability to move forward because people couldn't or didn't bring forward their recommendations as to who might be appropriate.

I have to say that the Speaker, upon the request of the Premier, moved forward with having this report commissioned, and now we have it. One of our commitments was that when we received this report, we would act on this report. I believe that passing a motion approving in principle the recommendations fulfills that commitment, that we accept in a general sense the recommendations that are made in the report with respect to MLA compensation. We do not ask Members' Services to tinker with MLA compensation. We do not ask ourselves to set our own compensation. We accept the recommendations that are made in the report.

Recommendation 1 is, in fact, to set MLA compensation at \$134,000, and we would believe that that recommendation should be adopted.

Recommendation 2 sets stipends for committee chairs. There's no other committee remuneration except for the chairs. While we might quibble as to whether that's appropriate compensation for

chairs, we are recommending to the House and requesting of the House that we ask Members' Services to implement recommendation 2. And so on with respect to the other recommendations with respect to other offices that are represented here; Leader of the Official Opposition, for example.

There is, though, Mr. Speaker, one recommendation, recommendation 4, which the Premier indicated as soon as the report was published, as soon as it was available to us, that she would not be able to recommend, and that's the recommendation with respect to the Premier's salary. The recommendation, in fact, suggests that the Premier's stipend should be fully 100 per cent higher than an MLA's stipend and that there should be additional compensation over the next two years to bring it up to a level I think equivalent to that of the Chief Justice of Alberta. The Premier, I think quite rightly, stepped forward and said that that's not an acceptable recommendation in today's climate, so we would ask the House to respect her request and to ask Members' Services not to implement that particular recommendation.

Some of the other recommendations – 5, 6, and 7 – deal, again, with compensation for other offices, 8 and 9 as well, and that is quite appropriate. That's what we asked Justice Major to do, and he has done it.

Now, with respect to some of the issues that were around discussion of MLA compensation over and above setting the amount, there have been in the public debate, both previous to and during the election, issues around the so-called tax-free allowance. All members will know that the tax-free allowance was something that's been set up – it's been available to governments across the country both, I think, at the provincial and municipal levels – to allow what we all know is the case, and that is the fact that we all expend our own personal resources in carrying out our office. That's a norm. Everybody does it, and it's to be expected. We now have, of course, in place budgets for each of our offices so that we can in fact have some of those expenses covered, and in fact Members' Services deals with some of the issues with respect to, for example, members who are coming from out of town, their accommodation allowances and those sorts of things.

I think it's fairly commonly believed that the tax-free allowance is an anachronism. Hon. Justice Major suggests that we retain it, however, because by eliminating it, all we really do is end up sending Ottawa more money. While that is, I think, something that none of us really wants to do – not that we have any disrespect for Ottawa, but we just don't want to send them more money if we don't have to – I think it would be fair to say that in the interests of openness and transparency and people understanding exactly what amount of money MLAs are paid, now is the time to eliminate the tax-free allowance and move to a fully grossed-up, taxable MLA salary.

It's very clear what MLAs earn, and it's very clear that MLAs pay tax on the same basis as everyone else. We would recommend that recommendation 10, concerning the tax-free allowance, not be followed through on and that, in fact, we implement recommendation 1 for the salary level that's in recommendation 1.

#### 5:10

That comes, Mr. Speaker, to recommendation 11 with respect to transition allowance, which has been another matter which has been the subject of a lot of discussion. In fact, I think it's fair to say that generally in the public there was some high degree of concern that the transition allowance which was in our compensation packages previous to the election was too high. In fact, Justice Major has come back and indicated that the existing one should be suspended and that a new transition allowance going forward from this point should be implemented.

Our Premier indicated prior to the election and during the election that she believed that we should eliminate the transition allowance. In fact, I think, again for the purposes of clarity and understanding, an MLA's salary with additional stipends for certain offices like Leader of the Opposition or minister with portfolio, et cetera, makes it very clear to understand, and then a clear pension piece would make it very clear for Albertans to understand. If we in any way confuse that with transition allowance, RRSPs, and those sorts of things in addition, that would not achieve the objective that we, really, originally set out.

So we're recommending that recommendation 11 with respect to transition allowance not be implemented, that the transition allowance be stopped as at the date of the election. Obviously, one wouldn't go back and take away an allowance that had already been earned, but going forward, we believe that the Members' Services Committee, in designing an appropriate pension as recommended by Justice Major, can incorporate from that perspective the overall fiscal amount that's set aside and achieve the objective of the overall level of compensation for MLAs without having a transition allowance. That design can be structured so that people could access a pension amount if they needed a certain amount for transition.

That's why, when we get to the next recommendation, we think it's very important that Members' Services not be constrained by the pension design set out in the report. It should be constrained probably by the overall fiscal amount, but governments across the country have been struggling with the whole issue of defined contribution versus defined benefit plans. Defined benefit plans have been a problem for the private sector in terms of unfunded liability, and it's certainly been a problem for governments in terms of unfunded liability.

While there's much that can go into the design of a pension plan to try and eliminate that particular concern, I think it's fair to say that government has certainly been looking at how you move to a defined contribution basis rather than defined benefit basis, and it wouldn't be, in our view, a great step forward to be talking about looking at that from an overall government perspective, as other governments and others across the country are doing, and then going ahead with implementing a defined benefit plan.

What we would request is that the House ask the Members' Services Committee to look at defined contribution to determine whether an appropriate defined contribution plan can be designed and put in place for members which would respect the overall recommendation of the Major report in terms of the amount of money that goes into it, the overall compensation, if you will, for MLAs but move away from the concept of defined benefit, with all of its perceived warts, and move into a defined contribution which limits the liability of Albertans yet still respects the fact that MLAs, by coming to this House, often give up the best earning years of their lives and need to have some combination there which will help to provide them for transition back into the private sector or into retirement.

I won't go on at length about that because I think it's in the hands of the Members' Services Committee, really, to do the detailed work, and members in each party have representatives on that committee to discuss it at the committee level. But I would say that when it gets to committee, I would hope that members will look very, very closely at defined contribution programs and determine one that would fit the needs of MLAs but as well meet the fiscal criteria or the overall compensation criteria set by Justice Major and have it, if it's possible, simple enough so that we can achieve the objective we had, which is for clarity, openness, and transparency, a very simple way for people to look and see what MLAs earn as they do their work on their behalf.

There are other recommendations in the report, Mr. Speaker. The question of the health benefits and other benefits: the recommendation is to maintain them. Certainly, we don't see any problem with that. Adjustments to compensation: it should be adjusted annually. The CPI as opposed to the average weekly earnings index makes sense.

Then recommendation 15 with respect to the review: this is why, again, there needs to be a subsection on the motion because I think the Members' Services Committee will have to look at that. We're not in the position, obviously, to demand the court put together a review committee for us. This recommendation is to be reviewed by a committee of judges. Obviously, we can't command in the report to put together a committee of judges, so the Members' Services Committee will have to deal with that and see the appropriate way to implement that type of a review and to see whether that review can be put in place.

Overall, we believe that the objective has been achieved. The House asked for an independent report. It has an independent report. The independent report has set an overall level of compensation that I believe fits what Albertans have been telling us. They want MLAs to be appropriately paid. They don't want us to be overpaid; they don't want us to be underpaid. We have a pay structure set out in the report which accomplishes that. We would ask that we not proceed with the tax-free allowance in the interest of openness and transparency and, again, what we believe Albertans have been telling us.

While I think that from a personal perspective I'd say that the office of the Premier should command a salary which is equivalent to the senior civil servant in the province or the senior justice in the province, it's not something which the Premier wants to do, and I believe it's not something which we want to do as a Legislature at this point.

I think the differential that's being proposed to maintain essentially the same differential that we have now – I believe it's about 26.2 per cent now – maintaining it at 25 per cent makes sense and then to move to an appropriate pension design but one which respects the fact that Canadians, whether in the private sector or in government, are currently looking at moving to defined contributions as a better way of understanding the overall cost of building a pension plan as opposed to defined benefit, which certainly might be seen by many as being preferential for the individuals receiving the pension plan but has its risks in terms of its long-term potential liability and the ability to keep up the investment necessary to meet the defined benefit in the long term and over a long period of time.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a report which accomplishes what the Legislature asked in the motion that was passed unanimously and achieves what the Premier asked, that there be an independent report to set out the overall fiscal compensation for MLAs to appropriate levels. It does that. Where we are asking the Members' Services Committee to deviate from the report, I think, is in structure rather than in substance, and so I think it meets the objective of saying that we're accepting Mr. Justice Major's report.

We're asking the Members' Services Committee to implement it as quickly as possible to put this particular issue to bed so that Albertans know how much their MLAs are paid and we can get on with dealing with the business of the province in terms of what kind of a province we want to create. How do we address the issues of poverty and homelessness? How do we make sure that the budget is balanced, and how do we make sure that the economy is addressed in the right framework for every Albertan to be able to participate in the opportunities which this province affords? We can move on to those.

This is an important issue, but it's not really the issue that we're elected to do, so we should get it done, get it behind us, and move on to the big issues of the day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

Hon. members, this motion is debatable, and I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm standing up to speak against Motion 11. Let's go back historically and find out how this MLA pay and no-committee pay mess all started. MLAs were getting paid. When they got elected, the Premier and the cabinet at that time and many in the current cabinet today set their own salaries, gave themselves a 34 per cent pay raise just before a major economic collapse, at a time when hard-working Alberta families were having a very tough time. Then at the same time this government decided on the committee structure, and they decided how often their committees would meet. Then this whole no-pay committee issue came forward.

5:20

Now, Justice Major has done a very comprehensive report. Mr. Speaker, as you know, you put two people in a phone booth and give them five things to talk about, they're not going to agree with all five of those things. I thank Justice Major for his very comprehensive report. I'll be honest. I don't agree with all the issues in that report. I do agree with some of the issues that he brought up in the report. The greater principle here is that we should not be setting our own pay. That's the greater principle. We should not be setting our own pay. Our job as leaders is to set the moral bar for society. If we're going to decide on our own pay, we may just as well tell everybody out there: "Hey, don't worry. You guys just tell us what you want and set your own pay on your own terms. That's okay because that's how we do it."

**Ms Blakeman:** Yeah. Perks and pensions, too.

**Dr. Sherman:** Right. Everything. Perks and pensions.

You know, 90 per cent of Albertans, Mr. Speaker, make less than a hundred grand a year. We have this government: health care workers have been going on strike because they won't give them 3 per cent. Do you know that 3 per cent of a little is a little; 3 per cent of a lot is a lot?

We should not set our pay because we have to be leaders. We must lead by setting an example, a moral compass. Whether I agree or disagree with the recommendations in the report, the principle is what we must live by, that we should not decide our own pay. It must be set independently. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, when she was a Liberal MLA, had said that it should be independently set. For us to take this report and cherry-pick things that we like and debate the things that are good for us or not . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Remuneration.

**Dr. Sherman:** That actually sets us back to what led us to this problem in the first place.

I would say, for those who are not happy, that I agree that the pay for the Premier is a lot of pay. It'd be higher than the Prime Minister is getting paid. The President of the U.S. is only getting paid \$400,000 a year plus 50 grand for expenses. If the Premier doesn't like it, she can cut a cheque and give it back. I wasn't proud of taking the no-meet committee pay, and I apologized to Albertans. I cut a cheque with interest and gave it back, and I challenge the government members to do the same.

The whole principle is that the pay should be independently set. He's done a comprehensive, independent report. Whether we agree with it or disagree with it, we should accept it. We should not be debating, cherry-picking which things we want and checking public opinion polls to see: hey, what's going to give us politically the best advantage?

Mr. Speaker, the judges are going to review it every four years. Justice Major is a very intelligent man. You know, he's made some decisions that he has thought about very wisely, and I believe we ought to respect Justice Major, whether or not we for political gain or loss agree with some of those decisions.

Mr. Speaker, that's really all I have to say. Thank you very much. I encourage every member of the House to accept this report in its entirety. If you don't like it, cut a cheque back when you get paid.

The last thing, Mr. Speaker. I do want to acknowledge the hard work, having served on both sides of the Chamber. Many members in the opposition here will serve on multiple, multiple committees. I do know that all members in every party here in the opposition – some were on six, seven committees – work extraordinarily hard. That unfairness needs to be addressed and fixed. We all work hard as MLAs. We all work hard in our constituencies and in the Chamber. For some MLA to work on seven committees and some on these make-work committees, we need to address that fairness because it's a lot of work here to serve our constituents. Please, let's not create extra work and make-work projects to keep some people busier than others, and let's just talk about fairness.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Motion 11, albeit briefly. It's interesting in a way and perhaps somewhat ironic that you apply for a job, as we all did in this last election, without any accurate knowledge of what the pay rate is going to be afterwards. But we all did choose that, and we're in this circumstance now where we have to move forward on what the compensation for MLAs is going to be.

Unfortunately, we're stepping into what is a bit of a quagmire in the history of MLA pay, I would say quite a lot of mismanagement historically in this regard. There are some fundamental principles that I think are at the root of why this has been such a problem over the years and come to a head during this last election. I think that the public recognizes and we recognize here, too, as New Democrats that the process of MLAs setting their own pay rate is in itself a deeply flawed process that has led to a very tangled web that has interfered with the proper functioning, I think, of the Legislature and of this last election, dominating when other issues could have been and should have been debated and, I would say, even threatened the very integrity of this House as well. So we have an urgent need to seek some resolution on this issue.

I think that the key to resolving this MLA pay question is to look out to, first, the pay rates and the procedures of regular Albertans in the province of Alberta and see first what their circumstances are and perhaps seek judgment from there. The first thing I would like to point out is that, you know, in the rest of the province many Albertans are suffering from the lowest minimum wage in the entire country of Canada here.

**Ms Blakeman:** And two tiered, to make it worse.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, that's right, a two-tiered system where waiters and waitresses are forced to be from a different pay rate as well.

**Ms Blakeman:** Primarily women.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder has the floor. Thank you.

**Mr. Eggen:** She's helping me out. That's awesome. Yeah, that's good.

Sometimes you're helping me. That's good.

A large portion of workers in this province have no pension at all. Through very poor labour practices and the boom-and-bust cycle of our economy we see an unstable situation for many people that are facing retirement without a pension, defined or undefined. On the other hand, the Major report that we saw just recently come out would make Alberta MLAs amongst the very highest paid in the entire country.

The incongruity of this situation between regular workers and our own MLAs here setting our own pay rate makes it very problematic at the very least, this situation, and I think we need to seek resolution based on the first principle that this Major report was created for in the first place, which is to have an independent decision made on our wages here. While this was the model that was created by bringing in Justice Major, almost immediately it was muddled and clouded and ultimately broken, this sense of independence of the Major report.

I wonder, in terms of setting the terms of reference for this inquiry, who actually would choose Justice Major in the first place. I would be very curious to know who actually did that. I'm suspecting it was the Premier who actually did do that and who set the terms of the references. You know, it just seemed very confused from the outset. Then ultimately immediately breaking that idea that we or that the government would accept the results of that report, again, I think just confused the whole issue.

I think it's important for us to take a long, sober look at this MLA pay issue and to refer it to Members' Services, where it can be worked through in a reasonable way, again, as I said, using those principles that I had laid out at the beginning: first, what is the standard for wages and pensions in the rest of the province for the rest of the people here in the province and, two, to try to go back to that concept of independence that the Major report was meant to be in the first place.

5:30

It's interesting, you know, that when you look back to ancient Rome and to Paris, France, after the revolution, political leaders were paid some version of the average wage of their constituents. They would get a pay raise if the wages of their constituents rose first. While I'm certainly not suggesting that this is one of the parts of the terms of reference for this pay raise, it does remind us of what we are doing here in the first place and how we will be judged by setting our own salaries. Ultimately, it's the constituents who place us here with the responsibility to have sober and reasonable judgments on the issues of the day, and they are looking to us now more than ever on this very issue to ensure that we give ourselves a reasonable wage but not excessive and that there's something there that's not gold-plated, that it's something that reflects how people are paid here, the rest of Albertans who live and work here and make the province go round.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is now available. The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if it would be appropriate to ask the hon. member if he could perhaps go back and review the process. He commented on not knowing where the name came forward from and alluding to the fact that he believed

it might be from the Premier's office. I can assure him that it was not the Premier's office who put forward the name of the honourable member. Rather, it was something that the Speaker took on, and I believe he spoke with the Members' Services Committee. That could be the subject of a review. I'd ask the hon. member to go back and review the record because it's clear it wasn't the Premier who determined what the parameters of the inquiry would be, but she did request the Speaker to get on with the job of getting it done, and we're glad that he did.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader. Hon. member, did you wish to respond? There being none, I'll recognize the next speaker. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's an honour and privilege to rise and speak to this government motion. I will tell you at the outset that I will be voting against this motion, and hopefully the reasons will become apparent.

I would like to thank Justice Major for what I thought was a very thoughtful piece of work that analyzed a great many facets and came to some very reasonable conclusions. By all means, we could hire 50 different people or 50 different organizations to do a report, and it wouldn't come out exactly the way that Justice Major decided on it. But I thought that if you reviewed the report, you were given an insight as to what he was looking for and what he was considering. I think that at all points in his report he made it clear the sort of different cleavages between what people outside of this Legislature think about the political process, what we do in this Legislature, and how we represent our constituents.

He was perfectly honest when he said that the pay of MLAs has to reflect an ability to attract people to the job, the ability to have people leave their professions at various stages of their lives and give up some very good working years in doing that to serve, and also a reflection that they will not necessarily win their next election. This is not a job for life, so there's got to be a balance. He also recognized the fact that it's a difficult balance because no matter what the pay is going to be, people at the grocery store, people at 7-Eleven are going to be upset. We're easy targets. At the same point in time I think his report reflected that. I applaud him for reflecting all that and going through all his points and honestly going through the analysis because the analysis, when you go through it, is pretty good and pretty succinct when you look at all of those components even if we here would have different opinions in varying degrees.

I also like the approach that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark took at the start of this, which was: how did we get here? It reminded me of this scene in *The Godfather*. It was after the godfather had initially been shot, and Sonny had been shot at the causeway. The war was winding up between the five families, and they met at the head of the table. There was Barzini, and he brings up the godfather, and the godfather gets up and says: well, how did we get here? Then he goes through the process, and he says: I will not be the one to forgo the peace. That was the final thing. The five families make up. They get on with business and go from there.

If we look at this sort of endeavour that we've got here, it goes back to 2008, to where the government did give themselves a raise of 34 per cent immediately after becoming elected. This was immediately followed by a recession and a government who found themselves in some political troubles, okay? In every sense of the word this issue often was front and centre in the upcoming election. So one of the reasons that this was acted on was political pressure.

I will note for the record that it's been a long-standing Alberta Liberal position that MLAs should not be setting their own pay.

That's why I believe – and I'm surprised she's not here to discuss this today . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you can't refer to a member being here or not.

**Mr. Hehr:** My apologies. I hope she'll be able to rise and speak, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, to sort of go through what she believed in her motion, I hope, to be true, that MLAs should not be setting their own pay, that we should move this to an independent process.

That's what I thought we all agreed on here in this House. I can remember that private member's motion when we all got up here. We all spoke about how wonderful this was and how, yes, this is a great process and, yes, we're excited by this and, yes, we realize that we here as politicians are not to be setting our own pay. I think that for everyone here, from the loyal opposition to government members, if you go back in *Hansard*, this was sunshine, lollipops, and bunny rabbits. Everything else was that this was going to be great. We then sent it to Members' Services, and there, again, we discussed it. Sure enough, we all willingly went down this process of having a committee. We had a person selected, and they would have a report. I think that at least the intent was that we would honour this report. Otherwise, I'd say: why did we bother, okay?

Why did we bother? It just, you know, drives me nuts when we go on these exercises in futility like this, which this is now. What we're doing here today is exactly what we said that we wouldn't do: us not setting our own pay. We're going to set our own pay. The government is going to do what they want. They're going to interpret this the way they want. They're going to add it to some pay down the road. Maybe they're going to still pay their MLAs to investigate various happenings around the province. I don't know whether their new special adviser is getting an increase in pay, but we've seen that in the past when we don't follow a set of rules and regulations set out by an independent member. So it leaves that an open, not airtight rule of what we're going to do.

I also appreciated that Justice Major – and on the Premier's pay the hon. Solicitor General said: did you agree with the Premier's pay? Well, whether I agreed with her or not is irrelevant, okay? We said that we weren't going to accept it. If the Premier didn't want the pay, as former Speaker Kowalski always said: if people don't like their pay, they can always write a cheque back to the treasury; we'll cash it. He never saw it happen before, but, you know, he said: we'll definitely cash it. So it's immaterial. The Premier could have gotten up and had a flag-waving ceremony quarterly when she got her pay: look at how great I am. So there are ways around this whole situation.

5:40

In any event, you know, I think we should have accepted this. There was a process whereby every four years a panel of judges was going to look into this. If there was public angst, public uproar, or political interference in what was supposed to be done, the judges would have a report. It would come out every four years. Hopefully, it would look at the situations as they came up. Hopefully, it would be in step with where the province was going and what was in the best interests of the Alberta people and this Legislature. I believe that in that forward-looking nature his report was not frozen in time. His report was not meant just to sit there and left to be a one-time affair. No. He's a thoughtful man. He envisioned a way to keep it relevant, to keep it honest, to keep it independent, which was very important.

Those are the reasons why I believe that this is an exercise in futility, and I don't think we should be going down this path, and I don't believe it's in the best interests of the Alberta people or this Legislature in the long run.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and might I say that you look well in the chair.

I would like to move adjournment of the debate at this time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

*(continued)*

[Adjourned debate May 28: Mr. Hancock]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms L. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today as the seventh Member of the Legislative Assembly to serve on behalf of the residents of Calgary-Glenmore and the citizens of Alberta. I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, and the other chair officers on your elections. Your guidance and decisions will determine the atmosphere of this House.

I would also like to compliment the officers and staff of the Legislature who've assisted us all in preparing for this session. I've been impressed with the patience and hard work shown by all of the LAO staff over the last few weeks. I look forward to working with each of you.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express my appreciation to all of the individuals who stood as candidates in the recent election. Placing your name on a ballot is at once intimidating, exhilarating, and a great sacrifice both personally and for a candidate's family. To my fellow members: I look forward to working with you as well.

Now to introduce Calgary-Glenmore. Calgary-Glenmore is in the southwest quadrant of the city. The constituency boundaries run along Glenmore Trail on the north, McLeod Trail on the east, Anderson Road on the south, and the Tsuu T'ina Nation on the west. To put it plainly, the constituency surrounds the Glenmore reservoir. The name "Glenmore" has an historical context in that it was first used by Sam Livingston, an early settler of the Elbow valley, when he used the word "Glenmore," which is Gaelic for big valley. The riding honours our history. Many of our schools are named in commemoration of notable figures: Louis Riel, Nellie McClung, John Ware, Premier Henry Wise Wood, and Bishop Grandin. There are 12 communities in the constituency. Two of their names reflect Alberta's past as well, and those are the neighbourhoods of Palliser and Haysboro.

In Calgary-Glenmore each community is represented by a strong community association. These associations are led by engaged individuals who make sure that their neighbourhoods provide the best environment to make a home and to raise a family. In addition, the various community associations organize family fun days, community cleanup and recycle days, parades, and Stampede events. They build and maintain outdoor skating rinks and organize many athletic programs for their members.

Community members also take initiative. In Oakridge one of the wooden playgrounds needs to be replaced. In fact, the children call it the splinter park. In the fall of 2010 neighbours working together researched the replacement policies, applied for and received grant money so that a new playground can be installed in the next month. This is just one example of the strength and get-it-done approach of Calgary-Glenmore residents.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the recent campaign I often spoke about how Calgary-Glenmore reflects what is great about Alberta. I observed how we have many fine facilities because of the planning, commitment, and spending of past governments. Some of these facilities are the Rockyview hospital and the Southwood public library. As well, there are two high schools, Henry Wise Wood and Bishop Grandin. Both these schools take pride in the programs they offer, be it in academics, sports, and one of them even has a marching band. There are many K to 12 schools also in the constituency which take advantage of the many delivery approaches allowed by Alberta Education. We have public schools, separate schools, and private and charter schools and quite a few home-schooling parents, who are all bringing out the best in our young people.

For the senior population there are many fine facilities. In total there are eight. I'll mention the Bethany care centre, Trinity Lodge, and Carewest. These residential complexes and others strive to provide dignity, respect, and quality of life for our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Glenmore is also home to several major tourist attractions. First, there is Heritage Park. This is a living-history museum, portraying the settlement of western Canada through exhibits and activities from the fur trading era to the time of bobby soxers. You can climb aboard an antique train, you can cruise the Glenmore reservoir on a sternwheel paddle boat, you can take a ride on a traditional merry-go-round, and you can flirt with your sweetie under the canvas on the caterpillar ride. There are more than 179 original and replica buildings and structures, and with the recent completion of the heritage town plaza, you can now visit a hands-on and interactive automobile museum, a brewery exhibit, and enjoy fine dining in the park.

Calgary-Glenmore is also home to the north and south Glenmore parks. Along with the Weaselhead natural environment area these spaces offer many biking and nature pathways for outdoor enthusiasts.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, these facilities remind us of the importance of making good, strategic decisions for all Albertans and are a result of the policies and practices of previous governments. This government will continue that tradition of putting forward the right vision in response to Albertans' values and the issues they face. The government has a policy framework for this time and place, a plan in harmony with Albertans' socially progressive values and fiscally conservative views.

During the recent election my constituents spoke passionately about the need for quality education in our schools and postsecondary institutions, the delivery of a public health care system, the growing need for senior citizens' services and facilities, and the challenges of transportation needs within the constituency. They asked that all of this be achieved within a framework of fiscal responsibility. Albertans understand and applaud our government's plan for zero-based budgeting and continuous three-year program funding reviews. As His Honour said in the Speech from the Throne, the government will deliver the outcomes Albertans expect in a financially sensible manner.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that improving literacy skills among our population is another path to greater prosperity for all. The most recent statistics indicate that for individuals to function fully in a knowledge-based economy, over 39 per cent of adult Albertans need improvement in their literacy skills and 44 per cent of Albertans need improvement in their numeracy skills. The reasons for these statistics are numerous. The reality, though, is that with improvement of these skills employment opportunities grow and income levels grow. I look forward to supporting this government's initiatives in this area.

Mr. Speaker, as MLAs together with our constituents we will be engaged in a democratic process that has a long and honourable history that allows for participation by all, and as our government indicated in the throne speech, one of our greatest priorities is more transparency. This can also be achieved by engaging Albertans directly in the legislative committee process. Questions and policy discussions explored in committee allow us to exchange ideas and to ensure that the best decisions are made on behalf of Albertans.

5:50

The parliamentary process is a structure with all of its rules, proceedings, and precedents which enables members to serve. While the model is challenging and rule bound sometimes, that is okay. It keeps our government alert, accountable, and accessible. As members of this Assembly we have all been selected by our constituents to serve the people. This is a role that I intend to fulfill with graciousness and respect.

The constituents of Calgary-Glenmore are clear in their expectations, and I will meet them. I will listen to their needs and

concerns. I will be their voice in their Assembly. I will be their advocate at committee work. I will fulfill this undertaking with pride, integrity, and commitment.

We have a history of over 100 years of parliamentary governance in Alberta, and look at what we have achieved. Alberta is the jurisdiction in North America with the best job creation, the best school system, and our health care system is there when people need it most.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I see this Speech from the Throne as the fulfillment of the mandate that Albertans entrusted our party, our leader, and our government with on April 23. May we aim for success with the dignity and respect that Albertans deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) would be available if anyone wishes to pursue it.

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, having had a very, very fruitful debate and response, although I know that many others want to, given the time I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:52 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]





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