



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Thursday, April 11, 2013

Issue 44

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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Calahasen	Sandhu
Casey	Stier
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 11, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, help us to fulfill our duties and our obligations as respectfully as we are able, help us to be mindful of the pressing needs of others who may not be able to advocate for themselves, and help us to be leaders and role models that others will truly want to emulate. Amen.

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Longest Serving Opposition Member

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we begin our Routine for the day and get on with introductions, I have a very significant milestone to which I would like to draw your attention. We have among us a very special individual indeed, who is the longest serving member to serve exclusively in opposition in Alberta's history. The hon. member was first elected to this Legislature on March 11, 1997, and has served continuously since that time for a total of 5,876 days, including today. [Standing ovation] Hon. members, there are many things that the Speaker can interrupt, but thunder is not one of them.

As I was saying, she has continuously served us for 5,876 days, and recently she surpassed Mr. David Duggan, Member for Edmonton, who served in opposition from June 28, 1926, to May 4, 1942, for a total of 5,790 days. I would like to thank this hon. member for her dedication, her loyalty, her service to what she always refers to as her fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, and also for her persevering work on behalf of all Albertans.

Now will you please join me in thanking and congratulating the very honourable Member for Edmonton-Centre. Congratulations. [Standing ovation]

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you a group of students from NorQuest College seated in the members' gallery who are in the LINC program, which is the language instruction for newcomers to Canada program. NorQuest College has a campus in my constituency, and I'm so thrilled they could come here to the House today. Of course, they're learning great skills at NorQuest College. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to introduce to you and through you five hard-working pharmacists who are here today to let the government know their concerns about the changes to pricing of generic drugs. I encourage the members opposite to note their constituencies. Welcome Aileen Jang of Redwater, Terry Fernandes of Redwater, Suhas Thaleshvai of Sherwood Park, and Darrin and Gaylene Erickson of Tofield. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. First, it is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 60 grade 6 students from Glen Avon school in St. Paul. These students are joined by Mrs. O'Neill, Mrs. Kendel, Mr. Boyko, Mrs. Piquette, and Ms Rak. A parent from this class is also with us here today. Ms Brandi Whelen is the Lieutenant Governor's great-granddaughter. I would ask that my guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second introduction. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four very concerned pharmacists dedicated to advocating for the best care for their patients. I'd like to introduce Maria Richard, Cameron Needham, Graham Anderson, and Monica Statchuk. They came to Edmonton today to protest the government's ill-advised changes to drug costs in Alberta. I'd ask these dedicated pharmacists to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all hon. members a group of grade 6 students visiting from my diverse constituency. The nine students from Morrin school are sitting in the gallery along with their teacher, Mr. Harvey Salts, and parent supervisors Danielle Burrows, Laura Cawiezel, Cam Chapin, Jacqueline Watts, and Megan Fortna. I hope they enjoy their time at the Legislature, and I'll ask them to please stand as my hon. colleagues provide them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to rise today to welcome a wonderful group of students from Calmar elementary school from my spectacular constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon. These 34 bright grade 6 students along with parent helpers and their teacher, Mrs. Janet Wilson, have toured our Legislature – and I'm looking forward to the picture with them later – and have learned a great deal about the building and our provincial government. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you Dr. Rod and Marilyn Oishi and family. They are shared constituents between Minister Campbell's riding of West Yellowhead and St. Albert. Marilyn is a nurse, mother to three children, and a tireless advocate for universal newborn hearing and testing in Alberta. The Oishi family started their personal experience with hearing loss with daughter Alexis, who was born with profound hearing loss six years ago. Through early intervention, therapy, and cochlear implants as well as a lot of love Alexis is a vibrant, beautiful, young girl enrolled in French immersion kindergarten who is succeeding and achieving in all areas of her life today. Marilyn and Dr. Oishi's third child, Annalise, was also born with hearing loss and is also thriving in the same fashion as her big sister.

Marilyn came to my constituency last fall explaining the persistent need for early intervention and screening for hearing loss that Alexis required as an infant. Simply because there was no family history of hearing loss, baby Alexis was not identified as a high risk. Universal testing would have immediately screened Alexis, saving precious time. Marilyn advocates for future

families, which could save delays that impede undetected newborns. We're grateful for her work. With Marilyn today – she's seated in the members' gallery – are many people who have supported her along her journey. Please rise as I call your name: Dr. Rod Oishi; Marilyn Oishi; their children, daughters Alexis and Annalise Oishi and son Braden Oishi; Geraldine Wolff; John Wolff; Lisa Oishi; and Marilyn-Malen Eustaquio. Please join me in welcoming them.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Wellness.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise today to introduce an inspirational group of health care providers who are here today in support of the Oishi family and who are advocates of universal newborn screening detection. Each of these hard-working professionals either works with individuals who are affected by hearing loss or are actively involved in its prevention. Seated in the members' gallery today are Kathryn Ritter, educator of the deaf and a listening and spoken language specialist who works at the Glenrose hospital; Kathy Holinski, an early intervention program manager at Connect Society; Cheryl Redhead, program manager with early childhood services at Connect Society; Joe McLaughlin, interim executive director at Connect Society; and Tracy Hetman, who is Mr. McLaughlin's interpreter. I would ask each of these fine Albertans to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and leader of the ND opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you my guests Harpreet Singh Sandhu, Harpreet Singh Gill, and Kashmir Singh. Harpreet Singh Sandhu is the managing editor of the *Asian Vision* newspaper and a renowned journalist in the Punjabi community. He has written many books and also hosts a weekly radio show on Radio Sur Sangam. Harpreet Singh Gill came to Canada as a young student and finished his degree in business management. He is fluent in five languages and works as the political editor at *Asian Vision*. Kashmir Singh is accompanying both of them as an elder and respected member of the community. I would now ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two groups of people. One is the action group of Congolese, and the friends of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are here today with us. I will be making a member's statement about the Congo. I will ask that as I say your name, please rise and wait until the end to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly: Pierre Mwamba, Oscar Ngoie-Kadila, Constantin Kibambe, Kipenge Kishala, Dr. Itachi Falanga, Arsene Mwamba, Nshole Modeste, Patrick Mukule, Luc Lukano, Charles Balenga, Justine Kachungunu, Dicky Dikamba, Georges Bahaya. I know my accent may be a little difficult, but those are the names I have. Sorry. They're here today, and as I mentioned, I'll be making a statement about the Congo and what these groups are doing in

Alberta. I would request all members to please give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my friend Katie Clark, a U of L grad with a bachelor of fine arts now living here in Edmonton. Two of her roommates happen to be pharmacists, and she's here today to see how secure their jobs are. Katie, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two members of my constituency that truly make a difference in their community. Ian Wilson is the CAO of the Bow Valley Regional Housing authority. The Bow Valley Regional Housing authority assesses and addresses seniors' and social housing in the Bow Valley region. This authority is a regional management body serving the citizens of five member municipalities, including the town of Banff. Accompanying Ian today is Councillor Grant Canning, who was elected to his first term on Banff town council in 2010 and sits as the town's representative on the Bow Valley Regional Housing authority. He is also a small-business owner in the town of Banff. I would ask the Assembly to give them their traditional welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Edmonton-South West.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three pharmacists who are among those today rallying against government changes that lead to drug shortages and higher out-of-pocket costs for patients. We have here today Jason Pon, Ian Lakhram, and Basel Alsaadi. All three are from right here in Edmonton, and although they're not constituents of any member of the Wildrose Official Opposition, we felt as a caucus that their voices needed to be heard. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you my dear friend Mr. Charles Balenga. He's a dedicated and hard-working constituent in Edmonton-South West. He's involved in the community, and he has always provided me with an ear for advice and support. I ask that Mr. Balenga please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to also introduce to you and through you another friend, Mr. Kit Poon. Mr. Poon is a tireless advocate and dedicated pharmacist who gives back time and time again to his profession. I'd ask that Mr. Poon please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see we're joined in the gallery today by a councillor; in fact, the deputy mayor, of the town of Peace River, Mr. North Darling. He's in Edmonton to observe the legislative process. Hopefully, he'll be able to sleep after watching this today. Mr. Darling also serves on the executive of the AUMA. Now, I forget his title. I think it's vice-president of small spectacular towns on the banks of beautiful rivers, something like that. I'd ask Mr. Darling to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to expand on my introduction this afternoon by recognizing the groups which my guests belong to, the members of the action group of Congolese and friends of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, made up of Canadians of Congolese birth and friends of the Congo, who are dedicated to raising awareness and improving relations among our two countries. These guests are active within our province, bringing awareness and betterment to the people of their original homeland, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Not to be confused with its smaller central African neighbour Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second-largest country in Africa and by area the 11th largest in the world. This country also boasts an estimated population of over 75 million and contains one of Africa's most biodiverse areas, with rainforests home to many rare, endemic animal species. Five of the country's national parks are even listed as world heritage sites. The Democratic Republic of the Congo possesses nearly 50 per cent of Africa's forests and a river system, according to a report by the United Nations, which could provide hydroelectric power to the entire continent. It is similar to Alberta in that it is incredibly rich in natural resources and minerals and has the potential to one day become an economic power in central Africa.

While there are many difficulties and struggles still to be overcome for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is through the efforts of those organizations such as the action group of Congolese and friends of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that inroads can be made. Those groups are very passionate about their homeland, and their work is undeniable. Their efforts to bring awareness to the plight of the people will only bring about a positive response and reaction from those who hear their words.

Once again, thank you very much as Canadians for doing the work and for your concern about the international global village.

Thank you very much for providing this opportunity to me.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Prescription Drug Coverage

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, across Alberta today and here on the steps of the Legislature pharmacists demonstrated against the Minister of Health and his ill-conceived changes to drug pricing. His last-minute Hail Mary attempt yesterday to get out in front of the protest by tweaking the plan didn't work, and his repeated insistence that all of this will benefit Albertans just isn't believable. We've asked dozens of questions in the Legislature.

There have been two large protests, including today's province-wide demonstrations. Why won't this minister just start over and get it right?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Redford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt that change involves some adjustment, but we are committed in this government to ensuring that Alberta patients, the Alberta health care system, and Alberta taxpayers are able to pay some of the lowest prices in the country for drugs. That's one of the reasons these policies were introduced.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity about three weeks ago to meet with a number of pharmacy students at the University of Alberta, and one of the things that they were excited about was the fact that this government has expanded the services that pharmacists are able to provide so that we can see a much more vibrant partnership in health care. This minister has built a plan that allows for transition, which is what pharmacists asked for, and we're doing well.

1:50

Ms Smith: Those pharmacy students were sure excited this afternoon when they were demonstrating as well.

The minister defends this mess by pointing to other jurisdictions doing the same thing, but those other jurisdictions restricted pricing on just six specific agreed-upon generic drugs. Alberta didn't do that. Alberta dictated prices for everything, a staggering, unprecedented intervention. One commentator aptly called it a, quote, clueless bureaucratic overreach. Why doesn't the minister see this?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member again demonstrates that she doesn't know what side of this issue she's on. In fact, I just had the opportunity to meet for about 40 minutes with a representative group of eight people who were part of the demonstration earlier today, and we talked about the issues that the hon. Premier already raised. We talked about the fact that Alberta is leading the country in designing a pharmacy services framework that pays pharmacists for the services they are trained to provide, services they are not paid to provide in other jurisdictions. We also talked about the importance of getting the best price that we can for generic drugs and about transitional support. We have done all of those.

Ms Smith: The 300 protestors sure would have liked to have seen the minister on the steps of the Legislature addressing them directly.

We in the Official Opposition have been pointing out for weeks that the minister's plan will increase prices, create drug shortages, and force pharmacy closures, yet he insists everything will be fine if we just trust him. Fat chance. We don't trust him. Albertans don't trust him. Pharmacists don't trust him. Why does this Premier trust him?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, quite clearly, what Albertans should not trust is the misinformation, inaccurate information the opposition continues to spread. The fact of the matter is, as I said the other day, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition can't have it both ways. She can't be standing in front of Albertans day after day claiming to own the purview of taxpayers of this province and then when the government makes a move to save \$91 million by moving to a benchmark of 18 per cent, that the rest of the country will surely follow, pretend to defend the interests of pharmacists and pharmacy businesses. We have done both. We will continue to support both.

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

Ms Smith: It's about the transition, and the Health minister should know that.

Hospital Parking for Veterans

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, this week Alberta Health Services in a callous and disrespectful way eliminated parking passes that the Calgary poppy fund has been purchasing for use by veterans. The minister's response was equally callous. He dismissed our concerns and said that compassionate parking passes are available. It's not the same thing at all. Veterans used to be able to get a pass at their local Legion. Now they have to plead poverty to a hospital bureaucrat each time they want to go to the hospital. It's a demeaning, belittling affront to veterans. Did the minister ask any veterans what they think of this new arrangement?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have said and I will say again that the way in which this issue was dealt with by Alberta Health Services was not to par. I have asked Alberta Health Services to sit down . . .

Some Hon. Members: That's not what you said yesterday.

Mr. Horne: What I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, was that we must continue to offer compassionate parking passes to health facilities for all Albertans who are in need, most importantly, including veterans. I've asked Alberta Health Services to sit down with the poppy fund to talk about this program, which was only available in Calgary, and see what can be done.

Ms Smith: Well, we await that review.

Yesterday this minister also told us he'd be looking into the shocking statement made by the AHS vice-president who questioned the worthiness of veterans to receive this tiny demonstration of respect and gratitude. What did he find out, and what is he going to do about that?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this government needs no help in standing up for the interests of veterans and people who serve this country. We also don't need any help in the form of trying to politicize a local issue in Calgary that, as I have said, was poorly handled by Alberta Health Services. [interjections] My direction to AHS was to sit down with the poppy fund in Calgary and work this out, and that's what they're doing.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I doubt very much he would be doing that if he wasn't getting pressure from this side.

We asked yesterday that the minister use his vast power and influence in setting health policy and reinstate the discounted veterans' hospital parking plan. Will he issue a ministerial order to reinstate the plan and show veterans the respect they deserve?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, this matter was not handled well by Alberta Health Services. I believe Alberta Health Services would be willing to admit that. [interjections] This is a local issue with respect to Calgary. It is not a national or provincial issue with respect to veterans. It is about a particular benefit that was made available by the former Calgary health region. [interjections] AHS needs to make this right with veterans in Calgary, they need to make it right with the poppy fund, and they are in the process of doing that now.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, I advised you yesterday that I would not be prepared to recognize someone who consistently and persistently heckles, and that applies to this side of the House as well as that side. I'm not going to give you any warning on it. I'm just not going to recognize you. And if you're not on the list today to not be recognized, then I won't recognize you on Monday or Tuesday or when you are. So, please, let's keep this down to a good level of decorum and a high level of debate.

The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The way to make it right is to reinstate the plan.

Ministerial Oversight of Health Services

Ms Smith: Speaking of vast influence and health policy, Mr. Speaker, let's discuss the interview published in the *Edmonton Journal* today with the chair of Alberta Health Services and his complaints about interference in the day-to-day operations by the minister. Now, this interview is troubling on so many levels, but let's start with the minister's role. Does he just set broad policy, then dodge questions about it question period, or does he maintain ministerial responsibility for the delivery of health care in this province?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, this is a fabulous illustration of a complete 50-50 and a hypocritical approach to what they expect the Minister of Health to do. My recollection is that we just had a question where the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the minister to fix a parking problem in Calgary and now stands up and accuses the minister of political interference with respect to health policy. I think the opposition had better figure out what they think their role is.

Ms Smith: That's not what I asked. I encourage the Premier to check out *Hansard* to see what I actually asked.

Over at AHS they seem to feel that the relationship between government and themselves has been too politicized. The chair complains that the minister damages their operations and undermines their work and that if the minister wants to direct the board on any matter, he should put it in writing in a ministerial order. What does the minister have to say about this?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the opposition wants to understand the source of political interference in health care in this province, they should take a good look in the mirror because they beg for it on a daily basis in question period in this House, they beg for it in their so-called advocacy in the media, and on top of that, they continue to undermine the work of Alberta Health Services on a daily basis and, in doing so, undermine confidence in the system. This is the behaviour that should be criticized in the media.

Ms Smith: I think they're misunderstanding. We want more ministerial oversight because, on the one hand, we have a minister who has lost trust with doctors, pharmacists, nurses, teachers, and now the organization actually charged with delivering health care; on the other hand, we have a superboard whose chair agrees it has a "terrible reputation" because of lavish expenses, excessive salaries, hefty bonuses, and ballooning wait times that now seems to want to function without direct ministerial oversight. How did this government put us into such a mess?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, the great irony of this is that the opposition loves to ask us to fix health care over and over each day until, of course, we try to change something. The board of Alberta Health Services does, in my opinion, have a very good understanding of their accountability under the Regional Health Authorities Act. The authority to operate the delivery system is a delegated authority – and the hon. leader might want to read up on this – under the RHA Act. The responsibility and the oversight for health care, of course, remains with government. Albertans expect their elected representatives in government to be accountable for health care. They are. And when it's necessary to provide direction, we do.

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

2:00

Taxation Policy

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest employment numbers from StatsCan are good news for Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall, that darling of Canadian conservatism and Canada's most popular Premier with an enviable approval rating of 64 per cent. Interestingly, these numbers show that Saskatchewan now has the lowest jobless numbers despite having a corporate tax of 12 per cent and progressive personal income tax. To the Premier. Tax fairness, sustainable, predictable funding for vital public services, balanced budgets, and low jobless rates go hand in hand in Saskatchewan. Why not here in Alberta, Premier? Why not, Premier?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the fact that on an annual basis there are over a hundred thousand people moving to this province because of the competitive economic environment that we have, the social programs that we're able to support, and the fact that we are planning for the future, that we are investing in hospitals, in schools, and in roads. We are the economic engine of this country, as we have heard the Prime Minister and many Premiers say over the past 10 months. We know that the budget that we have tabled allows us to balance exactly what we need to provide the services that are needed for Albertans, that can continue to draw people to this province, and we're proud of that.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, not from Saskatchewan, they're not.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Congressional Research Service, the equivalent of Canada's Parliamentary Budget Office, did a comprehensive 65-year study which clearly demonstrates that tax cuts don't lead to economic growth. To the Premier: why, other than ideological pigheadedness, do you refuse to make just some small tweaks to our tax system so Alberta can have sustainable funding for seniors' care, K to 12, postsecondary, health care, and maybe even some free hospital parking for our veterans? Why, Premier?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we've seen in Alberta is that the commitment that this Progressive Conservative government has taken to tax policy has allowed for a competitive and a successful economy. I'm going to put that up against the Parliamentary Budget Officer any day. What I will say is that without increasing taxes and actually keeping spending to zero, which is more than any party in the opposition suggested, we've been able to provide sustainable funding to build infrastructure and to build an economy that continues to attract people to this province every year.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, it's time this government had its own parliamentary budget officer to keep them honest.

Mr. Speaker, let's have a quick review of the Premier's promises. Stable funding for municipalities: broken. Stable funding for health care: broken. Stable funding for seniors: broken. Stable funding for K to 12: broken. Stable funding for postsecondary: broken. Every promise broken because this Premier absolutely refuses to address the province's revenue problem. Premier, I have to ask you why. Why do you care more about pleasing your big corporate donors and clinging to power for your leadership review than doing what's right for Albertans?

Ms Redford: You know, Mr. Speaker, simply because the opposition stands up and says something, as I say over and over again, doesn't make it true. We are committed to sustainable funding for those programs. We have ensured that we are not only committed to sustainable funding but continuing to build the infrastructure that's going to allow those programs to be delivered in the facilities that they need to be. That's what long-term growth looks like in a Progressive Conservative government. It works, and that's why we're on this side of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the New Democrat opposition, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

Alberta Health Services

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I was going to ask a question about political interference in the AHS to the Energy minister, but I think he'd just duck it.

Yesterday the Alberta Health Services Board chair said that he's tired of too much political interference in the health system. The minister interferes when it suits him and hides behind the AHS when that suits him. With the Ministry of Health and Alberta Health Services we get double the bureaucracy and no accountability. My question is to the Health minister: will he reduce waste, confusion, duplication, and mismanagement and abolish Alberta Health Services?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will not abolish Alberta Health Services. We will not abandon what is a model that is in fact leading the country, where we have assembled all of the health resources in the province under a single authority and are receiving savings and improvements in quality of care that are unparalleled across this country.

Mr. Speaker, the role of a delegated regional health authority is very clear. It is to operate the delivery system under the supervision of government. The Alberta Health Services Board chair understands the accountability of the board to government. We have an excellent working relationship, and I commend him for being willing to take risks and exercise leadership to improve health care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This PC government told Albertans that Alberta Health Services would reduce administrative costs, but administrative costs continue to skyrocket, another 21 per cent in the AHS budget for this fiscal year. The AHS Board has said: I believe that, quote, administratively we have a terrible reputation. With outrageous executive salaries, expense scandals, and bureaucratic duplication it's no wonder. Will the minister please stop creating confusion and wasting money and abolish AHS?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, this question around administrative expenses was asked and answered earlier in the week. As Alberta

Health Services has said and I will reiterate, they have changed the categorization of administrative services in their budget. They have added additional line items to administration that were not formerly there for the purpose of allowing Alberta to be compared directly with other provinces according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. That's transparency, and that should be commended.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this Tory government has time and again organized and reorganized and reorganized our health system. Administrative chaos, escalating operational costs, and systematic inefficiencies have plagued AHS from the beginning, and it's far from being transparent because we don't have adequate oversight in this Legislature over \$14 billion that is spent by AHS. Even the AHS Board chair admits that a major managerial overhaul is needed. What will it take for the minister to finally admit that the creation of AHS was a failure and get rid of it?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, one of the opportunities that we have as elected officials is to travel the province and talk to people that work in our health care system whether they're doctors, nurses, or perhaps even partnering with pharmacists. One of the things that I certainly have heard and learned in the last three years as I talked to health care professionals across this province is: whatever you do, please, don't dismantle Alberta Health Services because Alberta Health Services is a model that is cutting edge in this country. It was innovative. It brought change. It is now delivering the health services that not only Albertans need but that health care providers want to provide in the context that they do. That's why we won't abolish Alberta Health Services.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Strathmore Hospital Long-term Care

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Allow me to quote a memo from the Health minister regarding how AHS botched the closure of the Little Bow continuing care centre. Quote: there needed to be clear, concise communication planned with care residents, their families, and the community at large. It goes on: AHS has learned considerably from this experience, and it is utilizing these lessons to inform future decision-making. Unquote. Why, then, Minister, were the residents of the long-term care wing of Strathmore hospital, their families, members, and staff completely blindsided by yesterday's announcement to close the beds? Didn't you learn anything from Carmangay?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let's be clear. The long-term care services that are currently provided in the hospital in Strathmore are being moved to a brand new facility in the community that will provide a much better, more respectable and amenable environment for those residents. In addition, 82 additional spaces are being added in that new facility. I think the residents of Strathmore feel very well served by the new facility, by the services that they're going to be able to offer. And I know they were consulted.

Mr. Hale: Obviously, you haven't talked to the staff or the seniors.

Given that the 23 seniors who live in the Strathmore facility, many of them with high needs, will be transitioned to beds with

lower care levels and given the Health minister's own memo stating that they had learned from the mistakes at Carmangay, what is the minister's explanation for botching yet another long-term care centre closure and throwing the lives of vulnerable seniors, families, and staff into total chaos?

2:10

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, if this hon. member wants to stand in front of this House and make an argument that residents receiving long-term care in his constituency should remain in the hospital instead of moving into a brand new facility, then I think he's got some explaining to do.

Mr. Hale: The costs are up, and they're not going to get the same care.

Given that the residents, their families, and staff found out about the closure by mistake, given that they were supposed to be kept in the dark until May 1 and given that the minister's memo states that AHS and his ministry are, quote, making progress in the community engagement process, can you explain to this Legislature and to the community of Strathmore how blindsiding vulnerable seniors with yet another long-term care centre closure is making progress and learning from your mistakes?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services has done a great deal to improve community consultation since the incident that the hon. member referred to. The thing is that the constituents, I'm sure, in Strathmore-Brooks expect advocacy and expect representation from their MLA, and their MLA is standing in front of this House today, for all I can see, making an argument as to why his constituents don't deserve to move to a brand new facility. Their needs will be met. More people in the community will be served. I can't see what's not to like about that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Market Access for Energy Resources

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have had a great deal at stake in what was called the other day the most famous pipeline in the history of the world, even without being built yet. This has been a polarized debate in the U.S., where some have said that you either stand against the oil sands or you write off the environment. My questions are to the Premier. Can you explain the importance of being again in Washington to tell Alberta's story and to advocate for market access? [interjections]

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the opposition, we actually think this is an important issue. The reason it's important is because we know there's going to be an imminent decision made with respect to Keystone. I have to say that whether it's been our ministers on this side of the House, whether it's been federal ministers, whether it's been the Premier of Saskatchewan, although perhaps not the leader of the federal NDP, we have been there to advocate for what Canada and Alberta's environmental record has been, what pipeline safety has meant, and why the importance of building those trade relationships to create and sustain a North American energy economy will matter. People are making decisions, and they're listening to what we have to say.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the broad range of influential congressmen and congresswomen and senators from both parties along with important state department officials that

the Premier met, can you tell us more about these meetings and the messages they may have had for you? What are you hearing?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that people in the United States are asking us right now is to make sure that we're clear with respect to what our environmental record has been. You know, just this week there were confirmation hearings in Washington for a new Secretary of Energy, and some of the questions that were being asked were: "Are you going to put a price on carbon? Are you going to invest in carbon capture and storage? Are you going to be able to invest in energy innovation?" Those are all programs that we have in Alberta that we are very proudly talking about to ensure that decision-makers understand what our record has been so that Keystone can be approved.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. My last question is also to the Premier. Given that our federal Conservative colleagues have said that they, too, are working closely with the energy industry and with the provinces on greenhouse gas reduction and given that the federal Minister of the Environment said that he is on the same wavelength, going in the same direction as our government, can you explain why this collaboration is so important and critical to market access for our province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a great question that is. It really is about the sector-by-sector work that the federal government and the provincial government are doing because market access is important for Alberta, it's important for Canadians, and it's important for all of us to be able to reach those markets and to be able to do our part as Canadians and Albertans to reduce our environmental GHG emissions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by St. Albert.

Lacombe Hospital Phone Service

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another indication today that the bureaucracy of Alberta Health Services is failing Albertans. We've been told that the phone line between the emergency department and ambulance dispatch at the Lacombe hospital was disconnected. That meant ambulances could not talk to the emergency department, nor could emergency talk to ambulances. The reason? We're told it's because Alberta Health Services couldn't pay the phone bill. Shocking. How can it be that Alberta Health Services gets \$480 million in administration money, but it can't pay the phone bills?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that the hon. member may or may not be correct, but I have no way to validate the payment of a phone bill in Lacombe.

Mrs. Towle: I would suggest you make a call to the Lacombe hospital.

Given that we keep hearing that Alberta Health Services takes months and months to pay their bills, and this isn't the first time this has come to our attention – unless, of course, it's executive bonuses; they seem to be able to get that out in time – and given that this has a direct effect on the delivery of health services, like ambulances being able to talk to emergency, maybe the minister could pick up the phone, call Lacombe hospital, talk to the health services staff there, and see if it actually happened.

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to spend her House time asking questions about accounts payable issues at the Lacombe hospital, that's entirely up to her. I have no knowledge of the situation she's talking about. Alberta Health Services is monitored by my department, and they're audited by the Auditor General of Alberta. I'm sure that they have their accounts payable in hand.

Mrs. Towle: I absolutely do feel the need to stand up for Albertans not receiving emergency care.

Given that I heard about this scary situation directly from a health care professional who works at the Lacombe hospital and who was there the day that it happened but is afraid to come forward because of repercussions and fear of firing – yet we have whistle-blower legislation that's supposed to protect them – I'm just wondering if you can help me understand why health professionals today continue to fear your ministry, your Alberta Health Services, and are terrified to come forward. Help me understand.

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member needs to understand is that you don't take an unsubstantiated allegation around an unpaid phone bill and turn it into a generalization about fear and trepidation on behalf of the employees. Alberta Health Services and this department, overseeing Alberta Health Services, are very proud of the employee concerns process that is available to all employees, whether they are health professionals or support staff in the organization. The answer is for the hon. member to learn about the process, understand it, and explain it to her constituents.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Hearing Tests for Newborns

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hearing impairment or loss is one of the most common anomalies found in newborns. It can lead to developmental delays in speech, language, cognition, and learning. Early identification and intervention can minimize these effects. Making hearing tests for newborns universal can make a profound difference in the lives of so many Alberta families. My question is to a very busy gentleman today, the Minister of Health. Will Alberta Health Services be providing universal newborn hearing screening tests?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. A big part of the reason we can do that is because of the efforts of people such as the Oishi family, who were introduced by my colleague earlier today. This is a relatively small program in terms of dollar costs, but it is going to have a huge impact on the quality of life for newborn Albertans for generations to come. We're very proud of this. It's an important program. It goes to health care, but it goes to early childhood development and education. It's the right thing.

Mr. Khan: To the same minister – and thank you, Minister – given the size of our health care system and the necessity of thoughtfully rolling out the new technology and programs, when can Alberta families expect their babies to undergo newborn hearing tests across this entire province?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, we will be implementing the program in a phased approach. The first focus will be on newborns in neonatal intensive care units across the province. Over time it will be expanded to include all newborn babies. Today two hospitals,

one in Grande Prairie and one in Medicine Hat, offer newborn screening services. We're going to build on that success and, as I said, extend it province-wide.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:20

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that programs like universal newborn hearing screening have a cost, can you tell us what outcomes we can expect to improve by implementing this new service, whether for newborns and their families or for taxpayers? That question again is for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the scheme of the budget for health care in this province, over \$17 billion, the \$8 million that it's going to cost to provide this program is a relatively small amount. The impact, we think, will be huge. I think that for many parents who have children with hearing impairment, the opportunity to have that identified early is going to mean a great deal. I think the impact on quality of life, personal success is something that we are going to have to wait decades to see the benefits of, but it is one of those things that will make a huge difference. It's an investment today in future generations of Albertans, and we're very proud to respond to the advocacy of people such as the Oishi family.

Municipal Assessment and Taxation

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, Alberta cities and towns get 2 per cent of the CLEA or industrial revenues, but the counties and MDs get over 98 per cent. The MD of Bonnyville and the county of St. Paul: 50 per cent of the people, 98 per cent of industrial revenues. Ditto in the southern Alberta county of Newell: under 30 per cent of the people but almost 98 per cent of the industrial revenues. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why is this minister colluding to starve our cities and towns with crumbs while allowing MDs and counties to get not the whole pie but the whole bakery?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, we work very hard to support every single one of the 349 municipalities and all of the 422 official and unofficial municipalities, communities in this province. It's evidenced by the MGA review, by the MSI support, by all of the other programs that we have. We're undertaking some extensive reviews, and we've committed that after the next municipal election we will be reviewing the roles and responsibilities and the revenue sources that we share because they're all coming from the same taxpayer.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Thanks very much.

Back to the same minister, then. I've given north examples and south examples. Can the minister explain why in central Alberta the MD of Wainwright rakes in \$24.5 million, but the town of Wainwright and the villages of Edgerton, Chauvin, and Irma have to share a meagre \$320,000?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's my constituency, and the community is actually pronounced 'shawvin,' not 'showvin.'

Mr. Speaker, every single municipality has different sources of tax bases. Some have a very strong industrial base. Some use linear assessment. Some have an agricultural base. Some will rake in more money, and some will have less money. We've always encouraged municipalities to find regional solutions. But we are,

as I already said, having a review about revenue sources and how we can make sure that all communities have the revenue they need to deliver services to Albertans.

Ms Blakeman: I am really interested to know why this government is willingly looking the other way while a large-scale rip-off is happening to municipal assessments, which affect 80 per cent of Albertans. Eighty per cent of us. Why are you looking the other way?

Mr. Griffiths: One more time, Mr. Speaker. I announced that after the next election we will be doing a review. Right now we're going over roles and responsibilities, and we'll be talking about the revenue sources and what we can do to ensure that every community has the tools and resources available to make sure they serve Albertans. We're not looking the other way. We're engaging municipalities to find solutions and are not planning, as the opposition probably would, to dictate a solution that doesn't work for everybody.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Airdrie.

Michener Centre Closure

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks one month since this PC government decided to evict 125 Albertans from Michener Centre. Yesterday the associate minister said that he would save \$110,000 on the backs of these individuals. The Premier of this province is forcing the most vulnerable Albertans to pay for her broken promises. This is totally unacceptable. To the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities: is providing the highest quality of care to Albertans with disabilities too much to ask of this PC government?

Mr. Oberle: Why, thank you, for that question. No, it's not too much to ask at all. If the hon. member would prefer that I don't implement the body of best practices in evidence and experience that have been developed in Alberta, across Canada, across North America for the care of those individuals, then he should say so in this House.

Furthermore, if he'd prefer that I didn't seize upon potential savings so that I can offer excellent care to more individuals, he should probably say that in this House as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eggen: Well, that's funny, Mr. Speaker, because given that the closure of Michener forces these vulnerable Albertans to compete for family-based care and given that this PC government budget slashes funding by 45 per cent for everything from attending doctors' appointments to skills training right now, how can this minister possibly defend his illogical decision to evict vulnerable Albertans from their homes at the exact same time that he slashes the very funding that would transition people out of Michener?

Mr. Oberle: Well, it's not funny, Mr. Speaker. I find nothing funny about that member's approach at all. As a matter of fact, he can contest, if he would like, the body of evidence that we're working upon. Then to suggest that we're going to throw people on the street and have them compete for spaces is ridiculous. It doesn't deserve comment.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, given that local ATA Catholic teachers, the Red Deer public school division, the Red Deer city council, not to mention most Albertans state their opposition to the closure

of this Michener facility, will the minister admit that these cruel budget cuts on the backs of residents are going to leave vulnerable Albertans paying for this government's never-ending list of broken promises?

Mr. Oberle: What I will admit is that I'm very proud of the mandate of this department, the mandate the Premier has given me to ensure that persons with disabilities in our province can contribute, lead inclusive lives, and have their contributions valued and that we will provide the care, the housing, and the supports for them to do that. We're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're on the leading edge. That's my mission, and that's what I'm going to carry on with.

Servants Anonymous Society of Calgary

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, Servants Anonymous is a nonprofit organization in Calgary that helps women escape the dangerous world of prostitution. Over the last four years this group has operated SAFE house, which has helped 176 women flee from these terrible situations without their former pimps being able to locate them. It is the only safe house of its kind in the province for women over 16 and their children. It saves lives and has the secondary benefit of saving taxpayers millions in health and policing costs. To the Minister of Justice or whoever can answer this. This group has had their funding for SAFE house eliminated. How can we justify this either financially or morally?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, this member will not find any argument that any and all of those programs that deliver this kind of valuable service anywhere in Alberta, anywhere in Canada for that matter, are not invaluable. There are a number of these programs where I know the minister had to make some very difficult decisions, but all decisions that have been made were always with one goal in mind, to make sure that services exist but are delivered otherwise. So I can assure this member that as important as it is – and we'll share in that – these women and victims of these crimes will not be left without any support. They will be receiving services just as well but perhaps through different means.

Mr. Anderson: That's not what Servants Anonymous says. They say that these women will have nowhere else to go. Please look into it.

Minister, given that this safe house regularly saves the lives of women and children and only costs government \$200,000 each year to run, can you not cut, say, the multimillion-dollar rooftop garden you are about to put on top of the Taj Mahal, that \$350 million monstrosity that's going up over there, or cut a fraction of the \$750 million you plan on giving Shell Canada for CCS? In other words, will you start putting the needs of abused and exploited women and children in front of new MLA offices and corporate welfare?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this is where that member and I have to part ways and not because we disagree that those services are important. But politicizing issues and cherry-picking an issue of the day against some building – well, they have already funded all of health care, all of my ministry and everybody else's ministry on the back of that one particular building. You can't do that. The only difference between government and opposition is that we have to make very difficult decisions that often keep us awake at night. We have to make those decisions. They can cherry-pick programs and tug at emotional strings and never be responsible for what they say.

2:30

Mr. Anderson: The decisions that are made affect lives, and bad decisions affect lives in bad ways. You should know that.

Given the ministry that cut this \$200,000 safe house for endangered women and children is the same ministry that just finished throwing away over \$69 million on a new communications system that has just been entirely turfed and also burned up tens of millions in a police college that will never be built, Minister, can you understand why so many Albertans are upset with this PC government's cut to front-line services when so much waste, bureaucracy, and corporate welfare continues to slurp up Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, very disappointing rhetoric. These members have the option of going through every budget every day, and they have been complaining about my budget in advanced education, yet yesterday all they found that I should cut in my budget was one communications staffer from my office. So this rhetoric for public display doesn't quite add up with their numbers, with the budget, and with what they actually find within budgets that should be eliminated.

Mental Health Capacity Building Initiative

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was pleased to stand with my colleagues on both sides of the House against bullying and discrimination of any kind anywhere on International Day of Pink. There was a mental health capacity building initiative pilot started in 2006-2007 across 53 communities and 153 schools. The purpose of the initiative is to establish projects that will provide the staffing and support required to implement an integrated school-based community mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention program. To the Health minister: what outcomes has your ministry seen from this pilot project?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. The mental health capacity building initiative is alive and well in Alberta. We have completed an external evaluation, and we're seeing some very positive results. Most importantly, we are connecting mental health and wellness capacity in our schools with the capacity that exists in the community. The review found that as a result of the initiative we're seeing improved resiliency and coping skills in children and youth and that, most importantly, people are talking about mental health issues.

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, will the government be working on the sustainability of this initiative going forward?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, we certainly will, and we're continuing to provide the necessary funding. The review, as a matter of fact, found that 93 per cent of school administrators reported that they have observed healthier behaviour in students, including better family relations and an increase in prosocial behaviour among students. More than 90 per cent of the youth reported that the program staff assisted them in their ability to cope with problems, so it's a very successful program. We will continue to support it and do our best to expand it.

Mr. Dorward: Can you discuss how you measure the success of the program in more detail?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are performance indicators, and in my last answer I mentioned a couple of the results that we have seen. Obviously, continuing to provide the \$60 million for the program is going to be important. We've continued to do that

since 2005. Also, the ability to tailor the programs to the specific communities and schools they serve to provide services like mentoring, counselling, parent supports, and addiction counselling is critical. Most importantly, we will continue to support the work of the initiative in normalizing the discourse around mental health and addictions issues in our society. If 13-year-olds can talk about it, the rest of us can as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Accountability of Government MLAs

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday hundreds of family members, residents, and caregivers rallied in Red Deer, telling this government to save the homes at the Michener Centre. Residents are rightly confused about why this government would want to scrap this facility while opposition MLAs, Red Deer city council, and public schools are all urging the government to keep Michener open. Many folks from Red Deer are wondering where their representation is and why their two MLAs aren't publicly protesting this decision. Has the government imposed a gag order on its own MLAs, preventing them from speaking out and representing the views of their constituents?

The Speaker: To whom were you addressing the question? Oh, the associate minister. Thank you.

Mr. Oberle: I'm not sure that question is to anybody, Mr. Speaker. It's a ridiculous question. I don't know if he was listening to the question from the member of the fourth party over there, but, you know, if that member would have it so that I don't move to implement best practices and research and some fine work that's been done in Alberta and across Canada and North America, he should also say that on the record. If he doesn't think that we should move to implement savings so that we can give more care to more individuals in our province, he should also say that on the record. If he had been at the meetings, he would have noticed at least that the hon. Member for Red Deer-North was at the meeting while the hon. Member for Red Deer-South I believe was in Washington.

Mr. Wilson: This is not the first time PC MLAs have been quiet on decisions that harm their constituents. Given that this government raised education taxes for communities across Alberta, including a 47 per cent increase in Wood Buffalo and double-digit hikes in Banff-Cochrane yet local PC MLAs were silent on another broken promise made by this government not to raise taxes, to the Associate Minister of AT and T: is muzzling government MLAs a part of your vision of transformational change?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, I find it very amusing that the party that had the thousand-dollar good-conduct bonds or the thousand-dollar bozo eruption prevention fund is talking about muzzling MLAs. On this side of the House we have MLAs that are strong representatives of their constituencies. They have one standard for all people of Alberta.

The Speaker: A point of order has been noted from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills – I'm sure all of us can imagine what it's about – at 2:37 p.m.

Let us carry on. Calgary-Shaw, you have a final question.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many PC MLAs seem unable or unwilling to speak out when their constituents are directly impacted by this government's decision-making, will the minister at the very least commit to adopting the Wildrose policy

of voter recall so that MLAs who break their promises after elections stay accountable to their real bosses, Alberta voters?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, the good members from Red Deer have been advocating on behalf of their constituents at the community level, at the municipal level, and through many years of good service in the Legislature while that MLA was still in Pull-Ups, and they're going to continue to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

School Transportation Funding

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a rural MLA one of the main issues for my constituents is the cost and hassle of transporting their kids to school on the bus. It can be expensive, and often kids have to stay on the bus for over an hour each way as school jurisdictions are not working together to develop joint transportation strategies to maximize efficiencies. My question is to the Minister of Education. Has there been a reduction in funding allocated to school jurisdictions to provide transportation for their students?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it's true that we are holding the line on transportation funding. There was one small envelope of transportation funding, the fuel price contingency program, that wasn't scheduled to continue past April 1, and because of the fiscal climate we're in, we can't continue that one. But we still have \$272 million of transportation funding. It's a slight decrease. It's a 5.8 per cent decrease. The funding is just one aspect. The member is right. If we want to decrease ride times and make transportation more efficient, one of the ways is to make sure the school boards are co-operating and looking at all of the strategies they can to make those ride times shorter.

Mrs. Leskiw: My next question: why aren't school jurisdictions required to work together to ensure that kids are being transported in the most efficient way?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we flow the transportation dollars through to school boards and allow them to be – well, they are in the best position to make decisions that make sense for their local communities. We do expect and we do encourage them to co-operate, and we have many boards that are co-operating. As a matter of fact, 32 of our 62 boards are co-operating. We put an element in the new Education Act allowing the minister to direct boards to co-operate on transportation.

Mrs. Leskiw: My final question: what will you be doing to encourage school boards to work together so that the funds that they save can be redirected to students and classrooms, where they belong?

2:40

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we do think there's the opportunity to save about 2 and a half million dollars in rural Alberta by transportation co-operation and another \$2 million in urban centres, and we're very encouraged by some of the most recent announcements from Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic about doing a study on transportation co-operation. So we're encouraging them. We're looking at incentives. We've got some incentives in place, and like I said, we've got the new element in the Education Act that will give us the ultimate ability to step in and give them more direction. But the regulatory review is coming up as well, and that'll be a great place for Albertans to have that discussion.

Statements by the Speaker

Decorum

Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day Program

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a moment the Clerk will call for Members' Statements, but before that and while I have your attention and a few things are fresh, I want to take a couple of minutes to just address a number of notes that I've received, and they've come from both sides of the House. It's with regard to interruptions, interjections, disturbances, distractions. You name it; we've had a little bit of it from all standpoints today.

On the one hand, I have some government members who are asking that the opposition members stop interrupting answers when they are being given. On the other hand, I have members in the opposition asking government members to stop interrupting them when they're asking their questions and so on.

There were a number of examples of this going both ways. When the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks asked his question, we had members of the government try to answer the question, and we had disruptions over here from the opposition members. They didn't like the answer, perhaps.

We have the same thing going on over there. We had questions from Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. We had questions from St. Albert being asked. The Premier started to answer the question, and in the middle of it all the government side started pounding away because they liked the answer.

It's a form of disruption either way. The Speaker is often called to adjudicate in moments like that, but you can't have it both ways, hon. members. Either you're going to sit there and interrupt each other all the time or you're not. Whether it's pounding and applauding somebody for a great answer or heckling them for an answer that you don't like, it's still a disruption, and it still leads to some form of disorder. What it really does, which really irks me, is that it prevents one or two other members from asking their questions because we've taken up the time with the disruptions. So could we please remember that and particularly remember it on Thursdays, when we're all so anxious to get home to our constituents?

You know, we sit here and we listen to allegations being levelled against each other, against government members, against opposition members, the government's policy, the opposition's policy, and so on instead of getting on with the real debate, and that's to hold the government accountable by all members, private members on both sides of the House.

You can't stand there and accuse members and accuse ministers and accuse government or, for that matter, accuse opposition members of certain allegations and not expect some kind of a response from them. If it's your purpose to come in here and evoke those kind of responses, then there's no point in me trying to enforce any rules around it regarding decorum, which we've talked about at length, regarding civility of debate or respect or whatever else you want to call it.

So please take that home over the weekend and study it because we have an opportunity here to help future MLAs, and I'm going to ask for your help in this regard.

The Legislative Assembly is again hosting Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day, which many of you should now be familiar with. That is going to occur on Monday and Tuesday, May 6 and 7. It's a great opportunity for 87 high school students, one from each of your constituencies, from all across the province to come into this Assembly and into the Annex and learn more about what we do. We want them to gain this better understanding of our parliamentary democracy and how it works. We want them to

meet you as their MLA, to meet other MLAs, and we want them to become really good citizens in the process. Your student, if you're able to help identify one, will come here and even participate in a debate right in this Chamber. Please let your high school students know about this because we have to get on with the program as quickly as possible. It is sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion, and there is no cost to the students whatsoever – none – and visitor services does all of the arranging.

Now, the deadline for MLA for a Day was supposed to be this coming Monday, but we have very few students identified by you so far. In fact, it's such a low number, I won't even quote it. So I would ask you to please over this weekend try and connect with some high school teachers in your area, some high school students that you know in your communities and to encourage them to take up this opportunity. I will be extending the deadline officially to Friday, April 19, so that we can get more students into this very important program. I would hate for us to lose it. Your constituency assistants have all of the information. Just remind them. When you finish here, send them a quick e-mail and see if we can get on with it. MLA for a Day really needs your help, and we'd appreciate any that you can give us.

In 30 seconds we'll call for the Clerk to announce Members' Statements.

Members' Statements (continued)

Taxation Policy

Mr. Hehr: I'm dedicating this to the province of Saskatchewan, home of Brad Wall, the darling of conservative politics and Canada's most popular Premier, home of budget surpluses, and the province that now has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. This must be befuddling to members of the PCs and their estranged cousins, the Wildrose, who despite all evidence to the contrary seem to hold steadfastly to the belief that our fiscal structure or, if that is too cryptic, our tax code is what drives our economy. In coming to this conclusion, both of these parties seem to forget that our province is located on 25 per cent of the world's proven oil resources.

Let's look closer at our neighbour. Saskatchewan is the second lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. Saskatchewan: home to a PST. Saskatchewan: home to progressive income taxes. Saskatchewan: home to higher corporate tax rates. In fact, if Alberta adopted Saskatchewan's tax code, this province would bring in an additional \$11 billion a year. With that revenue, we could have full-day kindergarten. There would be no cuts to universities and colleges. The government could build the 50 new schools and 140 family care clinics they promised. Alberta could also avoid going into debt some \$17 billion, and we could grow our heritage savings trust fund.

Saskatchewan proves that a reasonable tax structure does not lead to business leaving the province or unemployment skyrocketing. Instead, the Saskatchewan tax code has not only allowed for a budget surplus, but it's allowed them to grow their economy and have the ability to do what is necessary to ensure a civil society.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for both the PCs and their estranged cousins, the Wildrose, to get real regarding this issue. As Saskatchewan shows, there's no need to be the lowest tax jurisdiction by a country mile to have economic and social success.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Calgary-Currie.

Market Access for Energy Resources

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's mission to Washington along with the hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations earlier this week exemplified our government's unwavering commitment to broadening access to international markets for Alberta's energy resources. The citizens of our province entrusted us to be leaders and responsible stewards of our most valuable natural resources, and the Premier's mission further solidifies this position by delivering our message to officials on both sides of the Keystone debate.

The approval of the Keystone pipeline would not only strengthen our strong, long-standing bond with our southern ally, further bolstering Alberta's role as a responsible supplier of energy to America, but it would also lead to economic benefits for both Canada and the U.S., something the opposition is quick to conveniently ignore. It's easy for members across the aisle to blindly critique and politicize every single policy decision that this government makes, but baseless musings bereft of any substance do not benefit Albertans or help to establish a responsible Canada-U.S. energy partnership, one guided by our government's strong environmental track record on both sides of the border.

While the opposition promises to cut Alberta jobs and establish backward-looking socioeconomic provincial firewalls, our Premier, Alberta's Premier, is busy debunking myths and highlighting our position to Washington's decision-makers and concerned citizens alike. The last time I checked, revenue generated from irresponsible opposition smear campaigns and get-out-of-jail cards currently total zero, did not add to Alberta's environmental track record or future, and did not open international markets, especially since the opposition is so adamantly against our forward-thinking environmental policies.

Good economic leadership is derived through the fostering of strong international bonds, and I am proud of our Premier for bringing Alberta's message to our American friends. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'll comment on this again at a later time, but we don't traditionally allow points of order during private members' statements, and we'll review that matter.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

2:50

Calgary Meals on Wheels

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize an important nonprofit organization in Calgary, Meals on Wheels. For 48 years Calgary Meals on Wheels has given Calgarians in need healthy meals regardless of age or circumstance. Some clients include schoolchildren, the working homeless, single parents, seniors, and veterans.

When Calgary Meals on Wheels first opened its doors, it had eight clients and operated from a church basement. Today the picture is very different. In 2012 alone they delivered over 371,000 meals. Demand for their services grows every day. Meals on Wheels will be moving into a brand new production facility in June equipped with 16,000 square feet of kitchen. Meals on Wheels will be able to produce over 5,000 meals daily in this new facility.

As you can imagine, any nonprofit organization that serves as many clients as Meals on Wheels does requires a great deal of volunteers. Each day 60 volunteers are needed to make home meal deliveries. I have the honour to be one of those who delivers meals

within my constituency of Calgary-Currie. Meals on Wheels gives me the opportunity to listen and to be present for those in need.

I once delivered a meal to a soft-spoken woman in my constituency who seemed particularly quiet one afternoon. When I asked her how she was, she had just learned that morning that her son had passed on suddenly. I could tell she was alone and in shock over the news. We simply listened to her, let her cry, and promised to follow up and see how she was doing. In that moment she needed someone to be present, and the Meals on Wheels driver and I were there to care.

Mr. Speaker, this is why I ran to be an MLA. I served families as an educator for almost 20 years by caring and listening. The truth is that sometimes we don't know the strength of the simple things we do as politicians. I thank Meals on Wheels for being the conduit, the hand that has helped me do what matters for Albertans and for my families that I feel so privileged to serve in Calgary-Currie.

Prescription Drug Coverage

Mr. Barnes: This government's negligence in health care has caused ongoing grief for doctors, patients, and pharmacists. To complicate matters, the government now is attempting to create a smokescreen, hoping to distract Albertans from the real impact that recent government changes will have on Alberta pharmacies.

Yesterday in another attempt to change the channel, the government issued a press release promoting numerous myths about the situation facing pharmacists. The Alberta Pharmacists' Association was quick to issue a response to this out-of-touch government. For instance, the government's release reannounced \$10.6 million in funding through the remote access grant, Mr. Speaker, but the money was already committed to in past announcements. Surely this government can do better than rehashing old announcements to try to distract Albertans from the facts.

The government says that a \$1 per prescription transaction fee will help, but the facts state otherwise. Pharmacists have repeatedly said that \$1 is insufficient, but this government has refused to listen. This government also makes the claim that the reduction of generic drug prices won't hurt pharmacies. However, the set prices will result in a \$600,000 hit to every pharmacy's revenue line. That's a tough hit for anybody to take, Mr. Speaker.

What it comes down to is this: these types of Soviet-style price controls will actually drive up the out-of-pocket cost of medicine and result in shortages across the province. That means fewer Albertans getting access to the medicines they need to stay healthy. This type of government-knows-best approach is ridiculous bureaucratic overreach of the highest order.

Mr. Speaker, this has gone on long enough. It's time for this government to admit it was wrong, backtrack on these backwards and regressive policies, and preserve pharmacy services for all Albertans.

Get Outdoors Weekend

Ms Pastoor: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has some of the most beautiful outdoor places in the world. Following a winter hibernation in our homes we Albertans are ready to get out and enjoy the outdoors, and that's exactly what the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend is all about. The second annual Alberta Get Outdoors, or GO, Weekend takes place this year from April 12 to 14.

GO Weekend encourages Albertans of all ages and abilities to get out and enjoy their favourite activities or, in fact, try some new ones. We know the benefits of being active and that even small

amounts of activity help us to be healthier and happier. GO Weekend is for individuals to get fresh air and be active. It's an opportunity for entire communities to have fun together.

For this year's GO Weekend our partners at the Be Fit for Life network are hosting free public events in nine communities across this province. The website getoutdoorsalberta.ca has more information about these events as well as ideas on getting out and how to be active.

The Associate Minister of Wellness will be involved in many events over this weekend, and I'm looking forward to being a part of the Get Outdoors events that are happening in Lethbridge on April 13. We have a day of games, yoga, road bicycle races, and other healthy outdoor activities.

I encourage all Albertans to be a part of the excitement during Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend. Where is the event in your area? Visit healthyalberta.com, and you'll find out. For now, you GO: get outside, Alberta.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) to advise the House that on Monday, April 15, 2013, written questions 28, 29, 31, and 33 will be accepted, and written questions 30 and 32 will be dealt with.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Bill 17 Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2013

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce Bill 17, which amends the Municipal Government Act, the MGA, to implement the municipal sustainability strategy.

The MSS, the municipal sustainability strategy, was developed by a working group composed of representatives from the key municipal stakeholder groups such as AUMA, AAMDC, et cetera, and has received strong stakeholder support. These changes will result in a more proactive approach to identifying challenges, more community engagement and involvement in the long-term future of Alberta's municipalities, and more sustainable communities for our residents.

I look forward to discussing this bill as it moves forward. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

The Speaker: I just want to congratulate and thank the member for that first reading, which was less than one minute. That's very much in keeping with the tradition of this House. The reason I know that is because I once violated that rule significantly. So I thank you very much for setting a good example for the rest of us, who at some point may make first readings.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 17, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2013, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark or someone on behalf of.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the leader of the third party and the MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark I have two tablings that he referred to in his questions today. The first is copies of the report from the Congressional Research Service on Taxes and the Economy: An Economic Analysis of the Top Tax Rates Since 1945. This was released in September of 2012.

The second is the labour force survey from March 2013. It shows that our employment is above the level of 12 months earlier.

Thank you. May I continue with my own?

3:00

The Speaker: Just before you do, hon. member, I notice that it is 3 o'clock and that the Deputy Government House Leader wishes to pose a question.

Mr. Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that we ask for unanimous consent to delay Standing Order 7(7).

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Routine is not quite concluded, and the Deputy Government House Leader has asked that we be allowed time to complete that. It requires unanimous consent. Does anyone object to giving that unanimous consent? Please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hearing no objection, hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, please proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue with the tablings that are from people that have communicated with me, generally constituents from the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. The first one is from Anneta Alexandrovich around the funding of fertility treatments for Albertans. She strongly supports the inclusion of financial assistance and raises the issue of Albertans who are financially unable to pursue this and how difficult it is. She believes it should be covered by the public purse.

The second tabling is from Peter Koziarz. He is a diagnostic radiologist working in Edmonton. He's very disappointed with the government's position and what he feels are heavy-handed negotiation tactics with the physicians. He raises a number of other points, a very strong letter.

Next is an e-mail from Alim Nagji, who is working as a medical resident for Alberta Health Services, also not keen on the government's approach to negotiating with the doctors. He thinks it's going to have an effect down the line on being able to recruit prospective new physicians.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. No other tablings, Edmonton-Centre, on behalf of any other colleagues? All done?

Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, you had a tabling.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the recommended number of copies of the memorandum I quoted from during my question to the hon. Health minister regarding the communication protocol for Alberta Health Services and the closure of the seniors' care centre.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Little Bow, you had a tabling, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Donovan: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two things to table today with the requisite copies. One is to Minister Horne,

the Health minister, from a doctor in Alberta about the cuts. I'll be tabling that.

The other tabling is from a constituent of mine, Dorothy Seiller from Nobleford, who is not very happy with the health care system, especially when she went in in Lethbridge.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Please be reminded that we don't mention names of our hon. members.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, did you have a tabling as well?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for coming back to me. I have two tablings here. One, 50 or more copies of some of the e-mail submissions that we've been getting, is talking about the Michener Centre and people who would wish to keep the Michener Centre open.

The second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of some samples from the people that we met and received submissions from on our budget tour, that we did back in February, people saying things such as that they would like to see the government reduce their wasting of scarce resources on propaganda-style advertising and another one about health care as well. I would like to submit those, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any others or anyone on behalf of anyone else? Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five letters here out of the litany of letters that I've received on the pharmacare issue here in the province that I would like to table.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you for demonstrating a tidy way of doing a tabling. Congratulations. Well done.

Are there others?

If not, then I have a tabling today. Hon. members, I'm going to table something that I hope will catch your attention because I'm going to present here five copies of biographies with respect to our pages, who serve us so faithfully. Please take a moment to have a look at it.

We have no tablings to the Clerk. Can we, then, proceed with the points of order? I think I have only one, and I think it's from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. Please give us the citation and proceed.

Point of Order Referring to Party Matters

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), and it's with respect to a comment made by the Minister of Service Alberta. During the debate today it was very clear that he deliberately and purposely went out of his way to answer the question. The question wasn't directed at him, but instead he decided to take the question and recite an answer that definitely did cause disruption in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear – and you have been very clear – that party matters that do not relate to policy or legislation cannot be discussed in this Legislature. In fact, I recall even getting interrupted midway through a question I was asking on a specific party matter, and I wasn't even able to finish the answer because you made it very clear that if it's a purely internal party matter that doesn't relate to a policy or doesn't relate to specific legislation or what the government is doing, it cannot be discussed in this Chamber.

In this instance the Minister of Service Alberta referred to an internal party matter of the Wildrose Party. It has no bearing whatsoever on government policy, on legislation, on, for example, ongoing investigations by our Chief Electoral Officer or any other officers of this Legislature. In this case, just to be clear, he was talking about bonds that our candidates have to put forward when they're running for the Wildrose Party. These bonds are simply paid back, Mr. Speaker, and it's just to ensure that the rules in the nomination are followed. The question that the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw was putting forward was simply whether or not backbench government MLAs have an opportunity to speak up and stand up for their constituents, and he was referring to the education property tax, he was referring to the medevac situation, and he was referring to the Michener case.

I'll be very brief here. The Minister of Service Alberta knows the rules. He very deliberately and purposely answered the question. It specifically related to a purely internal party matter, that you, Mr. Speaker, have been unequivocal on in the past. I would ask that you absolutely and unequivocally admonish the Minister of Service Alberta for this comment. The subsequent result if people continue to ignore your rulings: it will just continue again and again and again from our side and their side. As this was an internal party matter deliberately and purposely put forward by the Minister of Service Alberta, I'd ask that you admonish this member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to waste a lot of the House's time but just a couple of points. First of all, any minister of the Crown can get up and answer any questions asked in this House, whether it's directed at him or not, and the fact that the Minister of Service Alberta got up to answer the question is neither here nor there.

Also, Mr. Speaker, you've made it quite clear in this House – and you talked about it again today – that we seem to get a little rambunctious in here and that the jabs go back and forth. Sometimes – I don't know; maybe it's Thursday afternoon – the opposition seems to be getting a little thin skinned when members of the government react to them on issues that have been raised.

I mean, if you follow the arguments of the deputy House leader for the opposition, they wouldn't be able to ask any questions in question period because they're coming at the government on a number of different issues at all times. You know, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the answer from the Minister of Service Alberta was a public fact. It was well documented in the media.

Mr. Wilson: So was the \$430,000 donation.

Mr. Campbell: We're not talking about that. [interjections]

3:10

The Speaker: Hon. members, please. The chair is up here. Thank you.

Mr. Campbell: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. There's a prime example of what I'm getting at.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to follow the rules that you've set. I want to see some decorum in this House, but the rules have to be both ways. The opposition has to be more careful in the questions they ask, and I would suggest that the government be more responsible in the answers they give.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Centre, did you wish to chime in on this as well? I saw you rise.

Ms Blakeman: You know, I can't much beat that. I think we all need to be careful of how we're addressing other caucuses' party business.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members on both sides of the House.

You know, this is a very interesting situation and an opportune time to make a couple of brief comments. The issue at hand here is with respect to an answer given by the Minister of Service Alberta in which he said, "Mr. Speaker, I find it very amusing that the party that had one-thousand-dollar good-conduct bonds or the thousand-dollar bozo eruption prevention fund is talking about muzzling MLAs," and he went on.

Now, I listened very intently, in particular, to what the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills said in his comments. He's absolutely right, hon. members. We can't come into this Assembly and raise party matters. I have mentioned this on numerous occasions, on several occasions in this House, wherein I've asked you to please remember certain rules that exist in *Beauchesne's* and *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and elsewhere. I won't go through them all. But it is explicitly against the rules to raise matters that pertain to party policies or party fundraising or party donations or party finances of whatever kind. In fact, in this case the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills went on to say that this is a Wildrose internal party matter, or words to that effect, and it may well be the case.

By the same token, it is very much in order to ask questions of the government's policy, of the government's budgeting, or the government's procedures and practices. However, you can't have it both ways again here, hon. members. On the one hand, I have a member of the opposition saying that we can't raise questions to do with party matters pertaining to the Wildrose, and on the other hand we can't have the Wildrose asking questions about the government's party, which is the Progressive Conservatives, and their policies because that has no business in here either. So neither one of them has any applicability here because it's a party matter.

I have been, as was stated, very unequivocal about this matter, and I will continue to be unequivocal about it. I have tried to be as consistent as possible in applying that rule, and I'm going to have to tighten it up a little bit more, I can see. I think the Deputy Government House Leader has commented that it is not unusual for us to get rambunctious particularly on Thursdays or when issues of a sensitive nature get raised. Nothing is more sensitive than party matters, nothing is more political than party matters, and you ought not be bringing them in here. Such matters do not belong here for debate. Those are the rules.

I'll tell you something else that's very interesting, and that is that there are rules about questions with respect to internal party matters or internal party fundraising. It's on that point that I have mentioned several times that those kinds of questions will be ruled out of order. What is very strange, however, is that I cannot find anywhere at my fingertips any rules about answers not referring to party matters. It would appear that questions to do with internal fundraising by parties and party matters are out of order, but answers may not be out of order. We're going to look into this a little bit further.

In the meantime I'm going to ask that the government members who are answering questions please refrain from delving into party matters that pertain to any of the opposition parties or to

their own party, for that matter, provided that we can get the same co-operation from opposition members. That would be, to me, a fair and balanced approach and one I would hope that you would take under advisement rather immediately because it is those kinds of issues that inflame this House more quickly than a match near a hot stove. I would ask you to please keep that in mind, and I will admonish anyone who strays from that particular vein of thinking.

My final comment is simply that these kinds of matters often require clarification. I think it's been adequately clarified. We're going to move on on the understanding that I have just given.

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Sitting Times during Main Estimates Debate

29. Mr. Hancock moved:

- A. On Monday afternoons during the period that the 2013-14 main estimates stand referred to the legislative policy committees, the Assembly stands adjourned at 6 p.m.;
- B. Notwithstanding Standing Order 59.03(4)(b), following completion of consideration of the main estimates by the legislative policy committees
 - (i) on April 22, 2013, or
 - (ii) on such other date of which the Government House Leader has provided written notice to House leaders and tabled in the Assembly,
 the Assembly shall reconvene in Committee of Supply at 9:30 p.m., at which time the committees shall report, and voting on the main estimates shall proceed.

[Debate adjourned March 21: Mr. Fox speaking]

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Government Motion 29 is essentially the set-up motion around the timing of the estimates debate, estimates being budgets. This is the one that sets it up so that on Monday night there would be two budget debates running concurrently, which, of course, is very difficult for the opposition members because when there are fewer in the opposition than the number of ministries, obviously, people end up being critic for more than one portfolio. With the third and the fourth parties currently with five and four members, obviously, each member is handling three or four different ministries, so the chances that you're double-booked are pretty high. My sympathy goes out to the legislative support individual, House leaders' services, who has to try and organize the schedule and make sure that we're not double-booked.

What it does end up doing – I, for example, have spoken many times about the number of seniors that I have in my constituency. I'd like to be able to go into the Human Services debates, where that's being debated, both to ask some questions but also to hear what the current issues are and how the government is dealing with them, and I just can't do that when I'm in one of the other five portfolios that I'm doing. Then I end up having to raise the issues during second reading and Committee of the Whole and third reading of the appropriation bill for the budget. It's okay to do it there, but I don't get any feedback from the government, so it's me making statements on the record of where I have concerns about things. I'd like to be able to participate in those budget debates. So it's not an optimum set-up for us.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the one area where there is a parliamentary tradition of optimizing the opposition is around finances. Of all of the legislative committees that are all-party select special standing committees of the Assembly, in which every party has a certain number of seats, the one that is always chaired by an opposition member is Public Accounts, and that's the one that reviews the government's finances, their books; in other words, after the fact. Once the books have come out, the opposition chairs that committee and has a significant number of the members on it to be able to scrutinize and hold the government accountable. So there is a parliamentary recognition of that, yet over my years here I have seen a steady erosion not in the ability of opposition members to robustly hold the government to account – they still do that – but the government does everything in its power to make it harder, to make it more difficult.

3:20

I mean, we're now down to a half-hour dinner break. I know lots of people think: "Oh, suck it up, Princess. Really, you're going to be complaining about a half-hour supper break?" Well, yeah. It used to be two and a half hours, and now it's a half-hour. So you've got people rushing from the House. And the break for the afternoon debates: same thing. We're adjourning here a little after 3 o'clock, and the afternoon debates start at 3:30. So you're bombing out of here, me with my arms full of stuff because I'm always carrying everything around, to get back, file your stuff, grab the stuff for the debate in the afternoon, and get up the stairs to the committee rooms in the Annex to actually start that debate. It's just not very dignified and not very efficient.

Another part of what happened with this particular motion is that there were a number of changes that were – I'm not going to say negotiated, Mr. Speaker, because that would be a word that would not adequately describe the process that the House leaders went through. It was much more: this is what we're going to do, and the rest of you are going to deal with it. Certainly, there are a couple of situations where the opposition House leaders feel very strongly that there was an agreement to carry on some of the debates in a certain way, and that has not happened. That is leading to a great deal less desire to be totally co-operative in the House. Could I put it that way? Would you all understand the code that I was using if I said it that way?

Hon. members opposite, you have to understand that everything you do affects what we do over here. If one of you raises a private party business as part of an answer, that sticks with people, and they are less likely to be willing to do a favour for the government like give unanimous consent to revert to the introduction of people or something. Why would they? They're not in a very good mood anymore, and they're not feeling very friendly towards government members. That all starts to add up. You know, there are little things that are said. There's the timing of things. A lot of that stuff all works together.

We have a lot of new people elected in both the government and in the Official Opposition, and I hope government members are beginning to understand what that does to the willingness of people to co-operate in a friendly manner and how that starts to erode as we go on. I think we would all agree that by the last day of the three weeks we had before the constituency break, we were ready to inflict bodily harm on each other, and that's just not a good state to work in.

One of the other things I want to talk about, that is a direct result of this government motion, is that budgets are now being exclusively debated in these legislative policy committees. I still often wonder if these aren't make-work projects for the government members. All of the ministries are divided into one of

those three legislative policy committees, and now we have the appropriate department's budget also going in front of these committees. The committees were humongous. They were 25 people. They've now been cut down to . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, we're on Motion 29.

Ms Blakeman: Yes.

The Speaker: I believe you may have already spoken, but it was a delight listening to you again.

Ms Blakeman: I was so entertaining. I got away with it, didn't I?

The Speaker: Well, it's only because it's your special day, hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: I kind of knew I had. I almost wrote and asked if I'd already spoken to it, but I'm glad I got the time I did. Thank you for being so kind.

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

Are there others who wish to speak to Government Motion 29? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can pick up where the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre left off. I guess we still have a couple more weeks of this system that we're using for the estimates, and I have a couple of things that I wanted to bring forward in regard to perhaps a more efficient use of the time and interaction and the depth to which we can debate the estimates.

The first thing that I was struck by – of course, I'm coming back after an absence – is that previously we debated the budget estimates here in the Legislature. When we were doing that in the Legislature, I noticed that there was distinctly more time and capacity by which we could interact with the ministers on the specific budget line items, and we had an opportunity as well, I think, to ask questions that could be pursued further at a later date through written questions and so forth. You know, with these budget estimates taking place in committee rooms, it just really feels as though we're somehow squirreling away this important democratic process into smaller and smaller places, where the public is less able to view what's actually going on.

Of course, number one, Mr. Speaker, there are no cameras in the budget committee rooms, so people are not able to watch the streams of the estimates like they can when things take place here in this Chamber. Quite frankly, we have at our disposal this wonderful room. I think that there's a certain level of gravity that lends itself to our budget estimates when we are in fact doing them here in the Chamber. If there are estimates that have a distinct or a special significance to the public, then, of course, we have the seating capacity here for several hundred people. In a budget room we maybe can only put 20 or 30 people, if that, and quickly the air gets sucked right out of the room when they're packed in there like that, and it becomes a less conducive atmosphere to have the kinds of debates that we need.

We know that there are lots of postsecondary students that wanted to see the advanced education debate, for example, last night, and there just simply wasn't the space or the capacity to deal with it. We have the whole system set up here with lots of seating and with the security set up here – it's all wonderful – with mikes and cameras and so forth. The symbolism of our moving from the Chamber here, to which we all have been elected, to these individual committee rooms: I just find that to be a little bit unacceptable.

Second of all, I noticed a distinct lack of continuity between the rules of the different chairs running the different ministries in the different committees when we were debating the budget estimates that I've participated in so far. There wasn't the continuity. I didn't know, when I went in, how the question cycle was going to unfold. Sometimes it was just a first-come, first-served kind of deal with a list, like we usually use in committees, and sometimes there was this rotation with PC, Wildrose, you know, NDP, Liberal. There was no rhyme or reason to it necessarily. When we challenged that, sometimes some of the chairs got quite snippy about it, quite frankly. Again, I found that to be a little bit less than conducive to proper debate. I think some continuity and some regularity around that, which can be negotiated in a civilized sort of way between the House leaders, would really help to make our estimates go a lot smoother.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, again, just jamming together all of these estimates in such a concentrated way really makes it difficult for us to be in our top form to make sure that we cover each of the debates or each of the ministries in the best way possible. For example, the week before the break I had quite a lot of estimates. I had 15 hours of budget estimates scheduled to my time. You know, I'm a pretty hale and hearty guy – right? – as most people here know, probably able to deal with those things. It just seemed to be such an incredibly compressed and rushed sort of thing. It was not necessarily the best way to go forward.

As I would like to say again, Mr. Speaker, what goes around comes around. The government members here, what's left of them after they lose an election and end up as a small minority, will have to deal with that same thing. I promise it will be with much more equanimity and graciousness, allowing a longer space of time so that the debates for budget estimates will not tax you in the same way that they did tax me over these last weeks. [interjections] Okay. Well, you know, there are other voices, though, that I cannot necessarily control that might try to exact revenge and deliver the same sort of inhuman working conditions for the estimates, so I can't guarantee being able to do that in the future.

3:30

Anyway, my point, Mr. Speaker, in three easy pieces, is that I think we should be debating the budget estimates here in the House, where we've been elected to do so, that we should be spacing those debates in a much more equitable sort of way, and that we need to have the continuity and the uniformity of the rules that are allowing the chairs to run those debates so that we all know what to expect when we get there.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

Mr. Campbell: I'd just call the question, Mr. Speaker.

[Government Motion 29 carried]

Public Interest Commissioner Appointment

30. Mr. Campbell moved on behalf of Mr. Hancock:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices tabled in the Assembly on March 5, 2013, and appoint Mr. Peter Hourihan as Public Interest Commissioner for a term commencing on the coming into force of section 38 of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act and expiring October 16, 2016.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this motion is debatable. Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. There are just a couple of things that have occurred to me as I studied this government motion. Aside from the fact that I think we're asking any individual that now will hold the post of Public Interest Commissioner through the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act section – we have given them an impossible task. I really feel that the government shepherded through an act that doesn't protect whistle-blowers, and I'm being very careful to tell people to not be depending on it to protect them if they do decide to step forward. In putting someone in place as the Public Interest Commissioner for this, we are asking him to take on an impossible task, and for that I thank him.

Two other things occurred to me as I looked at this. One, there is a backdating of the appointment. I don't know if the current Ombudsman – yeah, that's the position he has right now – who is this individual that will also take on the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, was doing the work starting last October, but it's interesting to me that it's backdated. It makes it that it expires on October 16, 2016, a four-year term. I think that most of the terms that government appoints people for are three years or five years, and then, generally speaking, there's an automatic renewal of it, so you're serving for a total of six or 10. With the four years I thought: what the heck is going on?

Well, if I look a little more closely, Mr. Speaker, gosh darn it, if that won't expire six months after the next election, so nicely in place and well into the mandate of the next government. I'm hoping that we will at that point be able to appoint a dedicated person for this. I think it's deserving of it, and I would like to see that happen, but clearly it's not going to happen for a while seeing as the current person's term will not expire until the fall of 2016.

Thank you for letting me raise those few comments, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to support the motion. I just really have a problem with the way the whole act was done.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Government Motion 30. You know, with respect to the appointment of this particular individual I would just have to echo the comments of the previous member. When this legislation came into place, there were so many loopholes throughout the entire act. Our caucus, in particular the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, had put forward dozens and dozens of amendments that would strengthen the legislation, but unfortunately the government voted down each and every one of them.

While this individual may be qualified, may be recommended by the Legislative Offices Committee, unfortunately due to the excessive loopholes that are currently existing in what they like to call whistle-blower legislation – the name of the act itself doesn't make much sense – there are very limited protections for real whistle-blowers.

One of the problems that we saw in the legislation was that it didn't go retroactively. If somebody has information going back years and years before and wants to come forward, wants to shed light on those facts, whether it was wasteful spending, whether it was bullying and intimidation, under the legislation as it stands, they can no longer do so. Even if the Public Interest Commissioner is appointed and capable, he would not be able to entertain any of those complaints that are filed if they go beyond a certain time period.

One of the other problems with the act is that what it does is that it forces an individual to go through internal measures within a government department rather than giving that individual the direct protection of the Public Interest Commissioner, which should have been done. We saw throughout that debate that independent third parties that had expertise and specialized in whistle-blower protection gave this government an F on this legislation. In fact, in many cases an individual who wants to blow the whistle on this government would have to seek particular advice because there are so many holes in the legislation that it may not be in his or her best interest to go under this legislation if they have legitimate concerns. They'd have to seek other avenues.

The other aspect of it is that if the media wanted to blow the whistle on something, they're of course not protected. You know, this Premier in the throne speech – it seems so long ago – had promised that this government would enter a new era of openness and transparency. She even set up a new ministry, AT and T, the Accountability, Transparency and Transformation ministry, a whole ministry just to try to achieve the outcomes in her throne speech, which were openness and transparency. But under this legislation – I hate to even call it whistle-blower protection because there is very limited protection – when you actually dig into the details, it does nothing to protect whistle-blowers and hence does nothing to increase openness and transparency in this province.

We had an opportunity here in Alberta to put forward whistle-blower legislation, the strongest whistle-blower legislation across the country, so that individuals could come forward, shine the light on infractions of the government or wasteful spending, and really have openness and transparency. Unfortunately, it's been universally panned by stakeholders, third parties, independent bodies that have expertise in this, and the media. Everybody has basically stated that this legislation was a failure. They've given it a complete failure. The Minister of AT and T should have been bold, should have come forward with the strongest possible legislation in this province so that we could actually see results on this file.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Government Motion 30, as was stated earlier, even if the Public Interest Commissioner is well qualified, even if he's exceptionally diligent in his job, unfortunately he has to abide by the weakest whistle-blower legislation in Canada. He has to abide by that legislation. His mandate would be limited to what's set out in the legislation, and this legislation was a failure. It does not protect whistle-blowers. We see again and again individuals in health care, particularly in health care, in education, and so forth who want to come forward and express their legitimate concerns to try and better the system, but they are scared. They are scared that under this government, where we've seen intimidation and bullying, they can't do that or there will be repercussions.

What whistle-blower legislation is supposed to do is protect those very same individuals. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this legislation does nothing to protect those individuals, so it defeats the whole purpose of actually implementing that type of legislative framework. This Public Interest Commissioner is in a very precarious situation because an individual could come to him, expose certain evidence, but under the legislation as it currently stands, without this government accepting the substantive amendments that were put forward by the Official Opposition, the legislation would afford those same individuals no protection.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, despite what was a good concept by the Premier in her throne speech, the whistle-blower legislation does not increase openness and transparency.

Those would be my comments on Government Motion 30. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's an honour to rise today and talk once more about the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act and the motion here to appoint a commissioner. Now, I find it interesting that we're appointing a commissioner to look after this legislation when, as we discussed back in the debate, the commissioner really has the ability for whatever reason to not investigate. It's right here in the legislation as well. It could be within the regulations as well. Under section 36 in the act it says:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations . . .

(j) prescribing circumstances in which the Commissioner is not required to investigate a disclosure.

We're talking about installing somebody into this position, and we haven't even seen the regulations yet. We don't know what this person is going to be allowed to investigate. I find it unfathomable that we're actually appointing somebody to this position before we've seen the entire set of regulations that will govern the implementation of this act.

[Mrs. Leskiw in the chair]

I guess it's with great trepidation that I'll be voting on this motion here today. [interjections] I said voting "on" this motion.

I had a lot of frustration with this legislation when we were debating it back in the fall, and my frustration continues today. I mean, really, this is not public interest disclosure. This is muddying the waters. This is adding smoke and mirrors back into Alberta politics and finding a way of burying the concerns of the employees of this government within another bureaucratic nightmare. Again, as I said, it's frustrating, and with trepidation I will be voting on this motion today.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You look really well. That entire ensemble with the Speaker's chair suits you very well, I must say. That's great. If somebody looks back in history, they'll note that I did do that job once briefly, too. I don't know if it's such a good one or not.

Anyway, I'm just up here, Madam Speaker, to speak briefly on Government Motion 30 in regard to the Ombudsman taking on this role of the Public Interest Commissioner for a term. I know that the Ombudsman's staff is a very competent team, and they are willing to expand and to take this onto the side of their desks as part of the whistle-blower protection act. I just have a couple of comments in regard to how that might unfold. As I say, the staff of the Ombudsman's office is very competent and has lots of experience, and I think that they could offer us probably quite a few insights as to the shortcomings of the whistle-blower protection act as it unfolds as they try to execute that act off the sides of their desks and through the Ombudsman's office. I'm hoping that we give the Ombudsman and their office plenty of latitude to give us some insights as to what shortcomings do exist in this whistle-blower protection act that we handed down to them.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We know that there were lots of problems with this act, and we know that the compromises that were built into this act, I think, eventually really emasculated the original intention of the whistleblower protection act. I'm hoping that the Ombudsman's office can in fact help to rectify that problem and that we have open ears and allow those officials to give us the information so that we can in turn give back, then, the tools that would make this an effective piece of legislation to move forward on.

Albertans want clear whistleblower legislation. We know that people in the public service, in emergency services, in just all different walks of life have been hamstrung by threats to their jobs and to the security of their jobs in the past, withholding the knowledge that they know might increase the safety of Albertans. It's been going on for years. It's not something that's exclusive to Alberta, but it's a situation that other jurisdictions around North America have been rectifying. You know, if we would have looked at some of the legislation that has taken place around this issue in different places in North America, in Canada in particular, we could have given the Ombudsman's office much stronger tools than we have.

With that, moving forward, I do feel that by perhaps heeding my words and allowing the Ombudsman to give us a frank critique of this legislation and asking where we can change and amend it – certainly, the basic concept of whistleblower protection I have no problem with and would like to see it move forward as quickly as possible here in the province.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to this particular motion?

If not, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

Mr. Campbell: I'll call the question, please, Mr. Speaker.

[Government Motion 30 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 12

Fiscal Management Act

[Adjourned debate March 13: Mr. Campbell]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to get up and speak on Bill 12. I guess I try not to be negative with stuff, but this one might be hard to have a positive sales pitch on for me. You know, it's tossed out an established format that we've used for over 20 years in this fine Assembly of how to format budgets and quarterly updates as we stick to the rules around what debt is. It seems to be a bit of a challenge now for this current sitting government on how to work around debt. Well, it could have been a challenge, but at least when they had enough money rolling in, it wasn't a big problem all the time. Now that that's cut off a little bit, we have a large issue with it, and I'm, you know, pretty sure we've identified it now. I guess what scares me is that when you sit and you look at how it's kind of all rolled out, we're going to change things around a little bit.

3:50

I caught the ire of the crowd a little bit yesterday with my question when I brought up about three different sets of books. That

was probably out of line because it's just three different ways of accounting for everything, which is very creative, to say the least. With the new format that has been proposed here with Bill 12, the biggest thing is that it doesn't retroactively go back, so it's hard to compare historical numbers. I mean, there's the odd accountant in the room. I think the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is one.

An Hon. Member: He's a very odd accountant.

Mr. Donovan: Yes. He's just one of those guys.

But, you know, we have accountants in the room. They are professionals, and they say: well, this is how you go through things. I know I've drawn excitement out of the crowd before when I've compared the changing of the bookkeeping to kind of how Enron went about doing some things a number of years ago and WorldCom, all of those. They kind of went around doing their accounting process so that it was very hard to tell what you were actually budgeting on.

You know, as we sit here, you kind of wonder why everybody on the government side sometimes think they are the smartest people in the room. Yes, they've got these 61 seats . . . [interjections] Cheer that on, Lesser Slave Lake. You might not enjoy it in 2016, I'm hoping.

I mean, we can always go back. I'm sorry for causing any kind of debate and anything that could be going on and the anger over there. Honestly, we're coming up to a year of being in here. A year ago right now we were all knocking on doors and shaking hands and going to public forums and talking about what each party and each place and each person had better than the other party and policies. That's how democracy works. It was great.

Now, the challenge is there. The candidate I ran against in Little Bow was a good friend of mine. Not at any of the forums did I hear him say: "We're going to go back in debt. That's our mandate. That's our policy. That's how we're going to run." You know, when you get into that, I think that's why a lot of Albertans probably don't have a lot of trust in all their politicians. You go out and you campaign on something. I mean, we had some colleagues in the third and fourth parties saying: let's just raise taxes. Hey, they were upfront about what they were going to do. Some said that they were going to raise corporate taxes. That was their way of balancing the books. Our party said: we're going to have to stretch out some things over some capital spending, maybe get rid of some bureaucracy in there, work out some management issues here and there.

Then we have the party that won. Hey, that's what the electorate said. You won, and I give you that. You won more seats. But I don't remember anybody over there saying: hey, we're going to go into debt when we do this. I wasn't lucky enough to go to Edmonton-Gold Bar and listen to the hon. member in their campaign, but I'm pretty sure he probably didn't say: if you elect me, we're going to take this government into debt. I'm just throwing it out there, but I'm pretty sure it probably didn't happen.

I think, you know, you've got to go back to what you said when you were campaigning, not that anybody in here on the government side planned on having to go into debt. But the whole fact is that you could probably look at it and say: something had to give. We can't keep spending a hundred million dollars at AHS for 17 months on executive squandering of money in there, the bonuses that go out. You've got to tighten your belt on things, but you've got to stick with what you campaigned on.

I wasn't there for the RRSP, I wasn't here for a government gold-plated handout and all the rest, so I gave mine back. That was what I campaigned on. I don't expect anybody else in this

room to give theirs back because I don't know what you campaigned on. I gave mine back. It wasn't an issue for me. I gave it to the food banks, gave it to a couple of charities, and that was fine. That was the process of it. You've got to stick with what you say.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but could I call for total silence for a second?

An Hon. Member: Somebody's phone is vibrating.

The Speaker: Somebody's cellphone is vibrating? Okay. The noise has stopped.

Sorry, hon. member, to interrupt. I didn't know if I was hearing some sort of an alarm signal or not. Carry on.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, you've got to stick with what you say when you're campaigning. It goes back to a trust level. Now, I'm very lucky in my riding. I'm only the third MLA in the last 50 years, but I had some great people ahead of me.

The hon. Ray Speaker: now, there was a guy that was in four different parties. He was Social Credit back when Peter Lougheed came in. He was a minister previous to that. He rode with that for a while. He actually ended up in four different parties in his time. That goes back to: it's not always the party, and it's not everything else. He was a respectful person who, when he said something, stuck with it, and he always did. He always stuck with what he said. He stuck with what his constituents wanted. To me, that's what your job is here. You're here to represent what your constituents want. You hear all kinds of things, but, you know, his skills were so good that when he retired from being an MLA and stepped down, he ran when the Reform Party was an upbeat new party coming along to maybe unseat some of the old problems that we had in a lot of old parties.

If you kind of spin it, I guess it's all in how you look at things, but I think that maybe that's kind of where I see our party at right now, an upbeat party that's going along and changing how you're doing things. We can sit and figure it all out from the other side. You know what? I'm more than happy to sit. I like sitting around and having the socials with some of the members from the other side. I think we always have to remember that when we're inside here, you have your party policies and what you stand for with your party. When you go outside, when we're all friends, you've got to get along. The 87 people in here all got elected by their constituents because they thought they were the right people for the job, that they would represent their constituency and would actually do what they said when they were campaigning.

Mr. Speaker had a great track record, from 1963 to '92: Social Credit, independent. He started his own political party when he wasn't happy with any of the ones that were on the floor currently, and then he crossed over to the mother ship at the time to finish out, and that's how he finished it out.

When he retired, a friend of mine, Mr. McFarland, became the MLA in '92 for 20 years. Again, anybody on that side of the floor that probably sat with him in caucus meetings – Barry is a very straight-up individual. You generally never leave the room wondering where he came from on something. He told you. That's what the man had, and that's what sold him so well in the constituency all the time. He didn't agree with everybody all the time, but he always let you know what he was thinking, and he always represented his constituents. I go through the *Hansard* from when Mr. McFarland got in and made his maiden speech, and his was on fighting for Little Bow. I think he was very good at it. He always stood up for what the constituents wanted.

He was a very frugal person when it came to money. From my

understanding, over a number of years the constituency office always gave money back to the government because he didn't spend it all. He didn't feel the need to have all the lavish things. I took over his old office. Trust me, it is far from lavish, but it works well for what the constituents in my area want. They don't need all the frills. They don't need all the gimmicks. They want responsible government and, actually, people that sit and do things that they say they're going to do.

So it goes back to when you're campaigning, whether you're an accountant in Edmonton-Gold Bar or a farmer in Mossleigh, to sticking to what you said you were going to do when you campaigned. I don't think anybody campaigned on, "This is what we're going to do and then change to go to Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act," to change a law that was sitting there for over 20 years that was working. I always get worried and wonder: why are we changing it? Obviously, there must be bogeymen in the room and stuff like that, as I've heard before, that have caused all these problems.

The oppositions before have done great jobs, and I think our job as loyal opposition is to hold the government accountable. To me, one of the things that I think needs to be held accountable is how we're going about doing things here. It's being fiscally responsible. It's always the starting of little things here and there. Everybody is, like, "Oh, that's not a lot of money" or "It's not this much money," but it all adds up. I believe I brought up I think it was Motion 507 or one of the motions that I've talked on before. I'm very lucky that I have a good rapport with the past MLAs. The government always had the money for capital, but they never put money in for operation when they built stuff so that you could do the 50 schools, the hospitals, everything else. I tie it, you know, to building a barn and not having the quota or the cattle or the feed in there or anybody to run it. It goes back to that you've got to do some truly good planning, I think, when you're doing things and not spend money just to spend money. It's a challenge.

4:00

I can see how it can happen. Everybody gets in, and they want to lavish everybody with what they want, and they want to get your ear because they're trying to get you to see their side. But where's the line of: what do we really need?

Now, I'm sitting here playing with my pen as I make my speech, and it's a Barry McFarland pen, MLA for Little Bow. Why? Because I'm cheap. There was a box of them left in the office when Barry headed out. I still use them. They've still got good ink in them. I mean, it's a PC pen from back in the day, and it hasn't exploded in my hand in any way, shape, or form. You know, you've got to be frugal with these things, and that's the challenge. You've got to sit there and figure it out. If we're going to lead by example in this format in here and show the people of Alberta that we're truly trying to cut back and we're truly trying to do things differently, I think we've got to sit back and figure out how to do it.

As I say, I touched on it a little before about the changing of bookkeeping and stuff, and that always worries me because usually when you start to change things like that, the format of it – so you can't actually go back and compare it to previous years – it's a definite challenge for, you know, the Henrys and Marthas of the world to figure out where the government started spending money, where they've added it, where they've cut it and put in an operational budget, a capital budget, and a savings budget. None of it really correlates with what had happened over the years.

I'd just like everybody this weekend when you go home – and I know everybody on a Thursday afternoon isn't always a huge fan of hanging out in here, but when you go back home . . .

Ms Blakeman: It's a fabulous constituency.

Mr. Donovan: It's a lovely constituency, and I always say that. I think I rent an apartment in it now, so I love it that much that I like to hang out here during the week.

But when you go home, just really sit back and think: last year, when you were door-knocking, did you actually say that we're going to go into debt? I'm not hearing a huge crowd, not anybody on that side jumping up and down and saying: yeah, that's how we campaigned. No. I distinctly remember that the campaigns were: "We can toe the line. We can keep having the schools, the hospitals, all of the infrastructure we need, the overpasses. You name it; we can have it."

Nobody from that side, that I remember, when we campaigned said: we're going to go into debt to do this. It's been very cleverly spun that it's like a household mortgage. Yeah, there could be some voters remorse, but that's part of the game, and that's how democracy works. We'll find out in 2016, in three short years. I mean, the year slid by fairly fast.

We've got to sit back and figure out: did anybody campaign on going into debt? I'm not saying that it's the end of the world. I mean, you've just got to go back and say: did you actually do that a year ago? I don't recall anybody doing that. Not one. There wasn't a person on the other side with that format, that policy, that said: we're going to go into debt.

Whereas now we've gotten into a situation, a problem of finances, and now you want Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, passed to change how we account. I'd just like everybody to go back and just really think. Is this how you want to run Alberta into the ground in four years? In all honesty, there's no plan in Bill 12 for how to pay it back. There's no strategy for what we're going to pay back or for how you're going to do it. I honestly think your strategy is that somebody else is going to have to deal with it. I'm hoping that with a little bit of rational thinking we can go back and keep doing some long-term planning on what we're doing for capital projects.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's Rimley-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It is the longest name for a riding in this Legislature by far, and I'm very proud to be its MLA.

The question is for the previous speaker, Mr. Speaker. He made a reference to Enron and its accounting issues. I was wondering if he would elaborate on how the Enron accounting problems relate to this budget and to how this government has been reporting.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow to respond, noting that there are others who wish to participate in 29(2)(a).

Mr. Donovan: Well, unlike other colleagues in here, I don't have a background in accounting, so I can't say that I know exactly how Enron – I can tell you about how Enron probably affected everybody financially in the province, tied in one way or the other. I've heard different stories of how they had blocked gas when they bought it and everything else and used some fairly fictitious numbers to make their numbers work. They cooked around the books, to say the least. I mean, it was done. What scared me with that . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, before we start to get notes of relevance, please keep this relevant to the particular subject under debate right now.

Mr. Donovan: You betcha. I was just trying to answer the question.

I mean, the thing was that there was so much money across there. I guess the relevance, Mr. Speaker, is that when they changed their accounting practices, they were doing that in the midst of trying to cover up some huge financial challenges that they had as a company because they got a little loose with the chequebook. They got a little crazy in how they were going to run things, and they kind of thought: we'll just spend our way out of it. I think what happened there – I mean, one of the largest accounting firms in the United States was their auditor, and they didn't catch it – was that they ended up going broke over it because they weren't doing a good job.

Mr. Dorward: Arthur Andersen.

Mr. Donovan: Arthur Andersen. See? I knew an accountant would know that. That's great.

What scares me is that I don't think anybody honestly goes in planning to do it wrong, but then all of sudden you get caught behind the eight ball, and the ball is rolling all the time. I worry when this government is changing the process with a bill on financing – it's been working for 20 years – and goes to the Fiscal Management Act to change the whole way it's laid out. I'm concerned about how that rolls out.

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I've got a very specific question for the hon. member with respect to debt and how he and his party feel about debt in their criticism of us looking at debt for capital. They give the impression that debt is a new thing, that this government is trying to talk about debt as a brand new thing. I'm sure he realizes that P3 schools, P3 projects are debt. There's a liability there. All the ring roads around Edmonton and Calgary: debt there. With every one of the P3 schools that we built, which is about 35 now I think, there is debt there. That's not something that this administration started. That's actually something Ralph Klein started. You know, to mislead people and to try to say that debt and deficit are the same thing – they're not. There's no debt on operations in this budget.

An Hon. Member: Yeah, there is. It's a deficit.

Mr. J. Johnson: No, it's not. There's cash to cover off the operating deficit, which is not debt.

There's a strong net asset position for this province which is much different than any other province in the country. There seems to be a double standard here, though, that debt is a bad word, in their minds, unless it applies to a project in their constituency.

When we announced the twinning of highway 63, it was very clear that that twinning, which was a demand from the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, was going to be financed with no opposition, no criticism from the opposition. When we announced the P3 schools, when we went to turn sod for the school in Airdrie – I've got the article right here. The hon. Member for Airdrie is on the front page with the shovel, turning sod on a P3-financed school in Airdrie last summer. Those are debts. Now, it seems there's a double standard: we don't want debt for the rest of the province, but if it's for our constituency, it's okay.

To the hon. member, who has a school division that we built a school in that just opened in 2012, Picture Butte, and there are more on the list from his school divisions: I'm wrestling with the capital list, but if his constituency gets a new school on the new capital list and it's a P3 school, which is debt, does he support that?

Mr. Donovan: It was a great question, and I appreciate that. I actually have six school divisions in my riding, with all of them crossing over back and forth. [Mr. Donovan's speaking time expired] I was so close.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. We'll look forward to your answer at another time.

In the meantime let's go to Edmonton-Centre.

4:10

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I haven't spoken to this one already, have I? Because I have a lot of notes, and that always make me think.

On this day when my long service has been recognized, it's very interesting to be debating this particular bill because there have been two previous bills in my time here which I have always referred to as the Government Has To Pass a Law To Keep Itself under Control Financially Bill. One of them was brought in by the Treasurer at the time, Mr. Stockwell Day, and that was the one that I think, honestly, was legislation that said that the government couldn't go into debt. And I thought to myself: how bad a manager are you that you've got to pass legislation to tell yourself that you can't go into debt? I mean, don't you just know not to go into debt? But, no. They actually had legislation that said that.

Actually, all credit goes to Ken Nicol, who was then the Leader of the Official Opposition, who kept saying to the government that you have to create – oh, there were two different ways of referring to it. So the government ended up creating a sustainability fund. He used another word for it. But he was saying that when you've got a surplus, you need to put some of that money aside so that given the cyclical nature of Alberta's economy and its dependence on oil and gas revenues, you know, when it starts to dip, you're able to ride it out with that.

You know, Mr. Nicol just pounded away at that. We were jeered at. We were laughed at. People said: what a stupid idea. Then before we knew it, the government adopted it. That was the second piece of legislation where the sustainability fund was set up. Again I kind of laughed to myself and said, "Well, that's funny because that's the one where the government has to tell itself to save money," which, again, would seem like kind of an obvious thing for the government to be doing.

Now we have an act – and they always have really great names like Fiscal Responsibility Act. Well, yeah. What was the other one? Oh, there we go. The Government Accountability Act. Yeah. I'd hope that a government was fiscally responsible. And the granddaddy was the Financial Administration Act. You know, I think that in a lot of ways some of the previous acts, the predecessors to Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, were a certain amount of PR and pomp and circumstance to be able to advertise to people. They were kind of election gimmicks: we've got legislation that we will not go into debt. Okay. Good. The government actually used that, and it was quite effective when they were on the doors, but I always secretly kind of giggled because I thought it was so silly that they would have to actually make legislation to have them do things that any Albertan would expect them to do anyway.

So here we are. They are now repealing two of the ones I just talked about. One of them has already been repealed. Just let me

check the back, and I'll see what they're taking out. Here we go. They're repealing the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the Government Accountability Act. Those two are now gone, and with that, we're getting the Fiscal Management Act. Are you all following along with this? I was going to say that the only thing it has in common is the fiscal, but it doesn't, so there we go.

Is this an improvement? No, it's not. This bill actually gives us less accountability from the government, less requirement to be keeping the books and being able to access them in a way that is not easy but at least not so darn difficult. You know, I'm a big proponent of open data because, really, aside from security things and super-duper confidentiality and budgets and stuff, where you might be able to manipulate markets and that, I think there's an awful lot of information that the government holds that it could just put online. Then we wouldn't have to worry about FOIP. We wouldn't have to worry about everybody being upset with this government consistently being voted the worst government to be working with freedom of information documents. I'm sorry; it's not always the worst. Sometimes it's second to the feds, I think.

But, you know, that information could just go online. It shouldn't be so hard to get fiscal information out of this government, yet each time the budget books come out, they're harder to read. There's less information in them. Health services: the entire budget for everything that goes into hospitals is one line in the budget document. Right. How do you tell what services are under that? You can spend your whole debate time going: "Okay. Well, what programs are under this particular vote or under this line?" Yeah, they make it really hard.

There's less accountability now. With the passage of this bill there's less transparency. There's less reporting of how the government is going to fiscally manage all they have. They've got a lot of money. I mean, this is the land of opportunity, make no mistake. My colleagues were talking about how wonderful Saskatchewan was today, but honest to goodness, this is the best place on Earth. We are so, so fortunate to have been born here or to have had the intellectual wherewithal to move here because this is where the dinosaurs decided to roll over and die, and as a result we have oil and gas reserves that are unbelievable.

That leads me to another thing that's missing from this bill. It does talk about a savings plan, but it doesn't talk about any endowments. Some time ago, when I was working with the Liberal leader, Dr. Taft, he had what I still think is the best idea, and I will happily have the government steal it. That was having a series of endowment funds that were coming from nonrenewable resource revenue. The money went into a postsecondary endowment fund, and there were certain percentages that were broken out. There was a postsecondary endowment fund, there was an arts and social sciences fund, there was an infrastructure fund, and then the heritage fund.

You know, we have so much opportunity in this province. Just imagine all the stuff that we could be doing. I admit that I still am baffled at how the government managed to go into a position of debt when we have so much in this province. Yes, I hear about the bitumen bubble, but . . .

Mr. Donovan: Ten dollars difference right now.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, I know. Well, that's the thing. The bitumen bubble always reminded me – it's a terrible image, actually – of somebody blowing up bubble gum. You know, it gets too big, and then it pops, and it just splats on your face, which is kind of what happened to the government. The bitumen bubble itself lasted for – what? – 10 weeks. Then it was over, and the prices started to settle out.

What's really annoying about all of that is that we know that this province relies far too much on using a cyclical commodity, oil and gas, to balance its budget. Never, never, never should you be using nonrenewable resource revenue to supplement an operating budget. We've been doing that in Alberta four decades, and it's just flat-out wrong. I mean, people say to us: "Oh, I pay your salary. You should be doing X, Y, and Z for me." [interjections] Oh, yeah. See? Laughter. Everybody gets that one. I think to myself: actually, you're not. When we look at the taxes and personal and corporate income taxes contribution to the operating budget – and the operating budget is the money the government spends every day to supply programs or buy stuff or make stuff happen in the province, right? That's the operating budget.

4:20

Well, Mr. Speaker, I shouldn't go off on a tangent. I get too far out there, and I forget where I was. Does anybody remember? No? Okay. Nobody else was listening. [interjection] Debt. Thank you. Yeah, you're right: debt. You know, the amount of money that taxes put into the operating budget is about two-thirds of what we spend at any given time in operating money, so we're subsidizing our operating, a provision of provincial government programs and services, by 30 per cent every day, every year, and that's why we get into trouble.

When the price of that oil and gas, that nonrenewable resource revenue, goes down, we're short on 30 per cent of our budget, and all of a sudden we have all these cutbacks, and the cutbacks just make it really hard to manage things for the government. We end up with all kinds of political ideologies that play out: the government never really liked something. Well, stunningly, that's what gets cut the most – what a surprise – even, you know, if it didn't deserve to be cut the most. I would argue that nothing deserves to be cut the most, but there you go.

The flip side of that is the surpluses. When I started, the budget that we debated that year was \$17 billion – \$17 billion – and every year after that the budget got bigger and bigger and bigger. What we started to see was a lowballing of revenue, high on the expenses, and then: oh, my God, aren't they brilliant fiscal managers. The government would come out with a honking big surplus. Weren't they brilliant? No. Not giving them credit for that because they had deliberately lowballed stuff. I'd like to believe that this was sort of careful management, but it wasn't. It was just so out of whack. We got into years where we had, you know, \$2 billion, \$3 billion, \$4 billion, \$5 billion, \$6 billion surpluses.

Six billion extra dollars. Where is it? That's a lot of money. Where is it? Did we get paved roads? Is every road paved with gold? I mean, the amount of money that we have already spent that came out of nonrenewable resources is something over 200 and some-odd billion dollars since we started to collect it and use it that way. You think: "Holy mackerel. All right. Where is that money?" When I look around, where is that money? Do we have, you know, the highest completion rate for university students, the most amazing postsecondary research fellowships? Do we have a 100 per cent or a 99 per cent completion rate for high school students? Do we have no children growing up in poverty? No. So where did the money go?

This is why it's important that as part of this fiscal management bill, Bill 12, there is a really concrete plan about, one, not spending nonrenewable resource revenue on an operating budget. Two, I believe there should be a series of endowment funds. I support the postsecondary endowment fund as part of that cluster that I've been talking about as a sort of way to save this money because postsecondary education is the key to our future.

Any country that's gotten itself into trouble got itself out of trouble by doing two things. One is looking for innovation and really inciting a lot of creativity from its artists, which made it a better place to live, and a lot more stuff started to happen. It was more interesting. People would move there. Head offices would move there, et cetera, et cetera. The second thing was investing in education. Those two things would always pull those countries out.

I think postsecondary education should be invested in. I think it should be one of those endowment funds, and that kind of thing is not in here. Yeah, there's another kind of run at the stability fund. Yeah. Great. I think there's a commitment to put money into the heritage trust savings fund. Well, terrific, but if we're going to do that, why don't we learn some of the lessons from – what's that favourite phrase you guys have? – best practices? [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired] You're kidding, Mr. Speaker. That's time? Wow.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. member, thank you very much for the speech. I would like just a little bit of clarity on your position on government debt. I was hoping you could give me some information on that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. My position on government debt is the same as my position on personal debt. Taking out a loan or going into debt to build an asset is worth doing. I mean, frankly, very few of us have the wherewithal to be able to build a home cash up front, so we save some money for a down payment – good; that's what we should be doing – and then we work it out with a bank or a credit union to borrow the money to allow us to build the house now and start to invest in an asset. You actually have an asset. It's worth something on the books, right?

I feel it's the same way for debt with government. You know, we need schools. I believe that government should build public institutions. I do not believe in P3s, and I certainly do not think that P3s are appropriate in Alberta. When we have such an amazing credit rating, we can borrow money for less money than they do. There are enormous problems with the maintenance of the contracts. We never get to see the contracts themselves, so there's a lack of transparency. The contracts are always written in a crappy way, and they end up with huge problems somewhere down the line. We get our resource or our asset back at some point at the end of the contract. So far we haven't taken any of them back, but – this will be another one of my I-told-you-so moments – we will get them back in a condition that was not what we were expecting and in worse shape.

Is it appropriate for government to borrow money in order to build infrastructure? Yes, it is, in the same way that all of us do. Now, is it appropriate for us to borrow money to pay off a credit card? No. That's not a wise way to be running your personal life either. You know, if you cannot pay off your credit card at the end of every month, you're spending too much money, and you need to cut back on it. No, you don't go into debt to pay operating money. Yes, certainly you do if you are providing infrastructure for the people of Alberta: schools, highways, bridges, courthouses. That's the kind of thing that you do want the government to be building for you, hopefully.

I mean, we've had such a bad run on that recently, where during the Klein years – sorry, Premier – one of the ways that they cut costs

was to reduce both the small maintenance but also the long, large, over-many-years investment kind of maintenance into infrastructure. As a result, we ended up at the end of that with, you know, crumbling bridges, bad highways. They were actually budgeting for and their goal, their target recognized worse conditions of our highways. It was in their budget documents that we would have worse conditions of our highways. They were planning for that. We're catching up with that. It's costing us money now. It cost us more money than if we'd done it to begin with.

There are all kinds of examples you can use about doing the maintenance on your car. You do regular maintenance on your car; you're going to have the car continue to run quite well. You do no maintenance: well, I'm sorry; I don't have a lot of sympathy for you when, you know, the muffler falls off.

I think you have to be reasonable about this. You end up with an asset that has a value that you could sell if you needed to; not that I'd want the government selling a bridge or a highway, but you could. It is an asset. Certainly, there are examples of, you know, some structures that we have sold in the past. I can think of a couple of schools, and they were sold to nonprofits, that kind of thing.

I hope that answered your question.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that's a convenient ending because it's 4:30. I would now declare that the House be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday under Standing Order 4(2).

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 28th Legislature - 1st Session (2012-2013)**Activity to April 11, 2013**

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

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

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

1* Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012 (Redford)

First Reading -- 8 (May 24 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 177 (Oct. 23 eve.), 193-96 (Oct. 23 eve.), 233 (Oct. 24 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 336-39 (Oct. 29 eve.), 354-71 (Oct. 30 aft.), 373-80 (Oct. 30 eve., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 476-84 (Nov. 1 aft., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 10, 2012; SA 2012 c8]

2* Responsible Energy Development Act (Hughes)

First Reading -- 207 (Oct. 24 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 263 (Oct. 25 aft.), 424-43 (Oct. 31 aft.), 445-57 (Oct. 31 eve.), 526-46 (Nov. 5 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 563-71 (Nov. 6 aft.), 593 (Nov. 6 eve.), 644-48 (Nov. 7 aft.), 649-69 (Nov. 7 eve.), 731-53 (Nov. 19 eve.), 777-94 (Nov. 20 aft.), 795-853 (Nov. 20 eve.), 902-05 (Nov. 20 eve., passed on division, with amendments)
Third Reading -- 921-41 (Nov. 21 aft., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2012 cR-17.3]

3* Education Act (J. Johnson)

First Reading -- 155 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 219-31 (Oct. 24 aft.), 238 (Oct. 24 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 380-407 (Oct. 30 eve., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 669 (Nov. 7 eve.), 688-94 (Nov. 8 aft.), 753-63 (Nov. 19 eve., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cE-0.3]

4 Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act (Scott)

First Reading -- 352-53 (Oct. 30 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 423-24 (Oct. 31 aft.), 593-614 (Nov. 6 eve.), 627-44 (Nov. 7 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 975-80 (Nov. 22 aft.), 1057-74 (Nov. 27 aft.), 1075-101 (Nov. 27 eve.), 1127-137 (Nov. 28 aft.), 1139-161 (Nov. 28 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1161-166 (Nov. 28 eve., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cP-39.5]

5 New Home Buyer Protection Act (Griffiths)

First Reading -- 261 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 354 (Oct. 30 aft.), 457-59 (Oct. 31 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 546-49 (Nov. 5 eve.), 571-83 (Nov. 6 aft.), 585-93 (Nov. 6 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 853-55 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cN-3.2]

6 Protection and Compliance Statutes Amendment Act, 2012 (Jeneroux)

First Reading -- 155 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 209 (Oct. 24 aft.), 264 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 459-62 (Oct. 31 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 855-56 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2012 c7]

- 7*** **Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012 (Denis)**
First Reading -- 774 (Nov. 20 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 972-75 (Nov. 22 aft.), 1015-41 (Nov. 26 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1166-167 (Nov. 28 eve.), 1191-92 (Nov. 29 aft.), 1221-43 (Dec. 3 eve.), 1261-79 (Dec. 4 aft.), 1281-1300 (Dec. 4 eve., passed, with amendments)
Third Reading -- 1315-37 (Dec. 5 aft., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2012 c5]
- 8** **Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2012 (Hughes)**
First Reading -- 156 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 233 (Oct. 24 eve.), 316-36 (Oct. 29 eve, passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 857-902 (Nov. 20 eve.), 943-53 (Nov. 21 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 953-56 (Nov. 21 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 10, 2012; SA 2012 c6]
- 9** **Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2012 (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 156 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 209-10 (Oct. 24 aft.), 272 (Oct. 25 aft.), 311-16 (Oct. 29 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 462 (Oct. 31 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 856-57 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates, SA 2012 c4]
- 10** **Employment Pension Plans Act (Kennedy-Glans)**
First Reading -- 261 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 521-26 (Nov. 5 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 668-69 (Nov. 7 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 857 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cE-8.1]
- 11** **Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2013 (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 1424 (Mar. 6 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 1480-86 (Mar. 11 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1534-41 (Mar. 12 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1583 (Mar. 13 aft.), 1559-60 (Mar. 13 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 21, 2013; SA 2013 c2]
- 12** **Fiscal Management Act (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 1438 (Mar. 7 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 1479-80 (Mar. 11 eve.), 1560-78 (Mar. 13 aft.), 1579-83 (Mar. 13 eve.), 1785-90 (Apr. 11 aft., adjourned)
- 13** **Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2013 (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 1456 (Mar. 11 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 1527-34 (Mar. 12 eve.), 1556 (Mar. 13 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1583 (Mar. 13 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1695-1700 (Mar. 21 aft.), 1695-1700 (Mar. 21 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 21, 2013; SA 2013 c1]
- 14** **RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act, 2013 (VanderBurg)**
First Reading -- 1690 (Mar. 21 aft., passed)
- 15** **Emergency 911 Act (\$) (Weadick)**
First Reading -- 1762 (Apr. 10 aft., passed)
- 16** **Victims Statutes Amendment Act, 2013 (\$) (Denis)**
First Reading -- 1762-63 (Apr. 10 aft., passed)
- 17** **Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2013 (Kubinec)**
First Reading -- 1779 (Apr. 11 aft., passed)
- 201*** **Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act (Quest)**
First Reading -- 92 (May 30 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 291-301 (Oct. 29 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 716-22 (Nov. 19 aft.), 1725-26 (Apr. 8 aft., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 1726-27 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)

- 202 Public Lands (Grasslands Preservation) Amendment Act, 2012 (Brown)**
First Reading -- 130 (May 31 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 501-13 (Nov. 5 aft.), 1723-25 (Apr. 8 aft., defeated on division)
- 203 Employment Standards (Compassionate Care Leave) Amendment Act, 2012 (Jeneroux)**
First Reading -- 473 (Nov. 1 aft., passed)
- 204 Irlen Syndrome Testing Act (Jablonski)**
First Reading -- 968 (Nov. 22 aft., passed)
- 205 Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2012 (Calahasen)**
First Reading -- 1117 (Nov. 28 aft., passed)
- 206 Tobacco Reduction (Flavoured Tobacco Products) Amendment Act, 2012 (Fraser)**
First Reading -- 1350-51 (Dec. 6 aft., passed)
- 207 Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013 (Webber)**
First Reading -- 1690 (Mar. 21 aft., passed)
- 208 Seniors' Advocate Act (Towle)**
First Reading -- 1315 (Dec. 5 aft., passed)

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