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The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Wednesday afternoon, October 30, 2013

Issue 62a

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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

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Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)
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Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
 Official Opposition Whip
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
 Liberal Opposition House Leader
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Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Campbell, Hon. Robin, West Yellowhead (PC),
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Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),
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Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)
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Drysedale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
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 New Democrat Opposition Whip
Fawcett, Hon. Kyle, Calgary-Klein (PC)
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W)
Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Fraser, Hon. Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),
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Horne, Hon. Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)
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Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),
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Khan, Stephen, St. Albert (PC)
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)
Kubinec, Maureen, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (PC)
Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)
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Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)
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Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),
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Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
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Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (Ind)
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),
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VanderBurg, Hon. George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC)
Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),
 Government Whip

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 59 Wildrose: 17 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 2

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| Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations | Fiona Vance, Sessional Parliamentary Counsel | Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms |
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| Jonathan Denis | Minister of Justice and Solicitor General |
| Wayne Drysdale | Minister of Infrastructure |
| Kyle Fawcett | Associate Minister of Regional Recovery and Reconstruction for Southwest Alberta |
| Rick Fraser | Associate Minister of Regional Recovery and Reconstruction for High River |
| Doug Griffiths | Minister of Municipal Affairs |
| Dave Hancock | Minister of Human Services |
| Fred Horne | Minister of Health |
| Doug Horner | President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance |
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| Diana McQueen | Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development |
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| Donald Scott | Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation |
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| Greg Weadick | Associate Minister of Regional Recovery and Reconstruction for Southeast Alberta |
| Teresa Woo-Paw | Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations |

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Amery

Deputy Chair: Mr. Fox

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| Bhardwaj | Olesen |
| Cao | Pastoor |
| Donovan | Quadri |
| Dorward | Rogers |
| Eggen | Rowe |
| Hehr | Sarich |
| Luan | Strankman |
| McDonald | Xiao |

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Khan

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

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| Amery | Eggen |
| Anderson | Kubinec |
| Casey | Sherman |
| Dorward | |

Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Rogers

Deputy Chair: Mr. Quadri

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| Blakeman | Leskiw |
| Eggen | McDonald |
| Goudreau | Saskiw |
| Lemke | |

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Chair: Vacant

Deputy Chair: Mr. Luan

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| Blakeman | Notley |
| Dorward | Saskiw |
| Fenske | Wilson |
| Johnson, L. | Young |
| McDonald | |

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Mr. Quest

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

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| Brown | Jeneroux |
| Cusanelli | Leskiw |
| DeLong | Notley |
| Fraser | Pedersen |
| Fritz | Swann |
| Goudreau | Towle |
| Jablonski | Wilson |
| Jansen | Young |

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Cao

Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

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| Bikman | Leskiw |
| Blakeman | Quadri |
| Brown | Rogers |
| DeLong | Wilson |
| Eggen | |

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky

Deputy Chair: Mr. Young

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| Casey | Mason |
| Forsyth | McDonald |
| Fritz | Quest |
| Kennedy- | Sherman |
| Glans | Smith |

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Mr. Xiao

Deputy Chair: Ms L. Johnson

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| Barnes | Jablonski |
| Bhardwaj | Leskiw |
| Brown | Notley |
| Cusanelli | Olesen |
| DeLong | Rowe |
| Fox | Strankman |
| Fritz | Swann |

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Olesen

Deputy Chair: Mr. Lemke

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| Cao | McAllister |
| Casey | Notley |
| Fritz | Pedersen |
| Goudreau | Rogers |
| Hehr | Saskiw |
| Kennedy-Glans | Towle |
| Kubinec | Young |

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Anderson

Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

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| Amery | Khan |
| Anglin | Luan |
| Bilous | Pastoor |
| Donovan | Quadri |
| Fenske | Quest |
| Hale | Sarich |
| Hehr | Stier |
| Jeneroux | Webber |

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Ms Kennedy-Glans

Deputy Chair: Mr. Anglin

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| Barnes | Johnson, L. |
| Bikman | Khan |
| Bilous | Kubinec |
| Blakeman | Lemke |
| Calahasen | Sandhu |
| Casey | Stier |
| Fenske | Webber |
| Hale | Vacant |

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask for your guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all our deliberations, in all our judgments, and in all the decisions that we are pledged to make on behalf of the constituents we are privileged to serve and represent. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: I see we have some visitors. The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Dallas: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly our esteemed guests: Mr. Quang Dung Tran, who is the consul general of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Vancouver; and Ms Phuong Anh Pham, who is the consul. Alberta's relationship with Vietnam is rich and multi-faceted with annual exports to Vietnam averaging \$35.7 million between 2008 and 2012; 25,000 Albertans of Vietnamese descent contributing to our cultural heritage, shared values, and vibrant economy; and agreements in place to advance co-operation and vocational training, labour mobility, trade, and agriculture-related training and research. This year marks the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Vietnam, a milestone in our friendship. Our esteemed guests are sitting in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd now ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

Statement by the Speaker

Brevity

The Speaker: Hon. members, further to my comments in the House yesterday regarding introductions and tabling returns and reports, I want to ask members to be particularly observant, if you would, please, of the following guidelines as we continue with the fall sitting.

With respect to introductions please be reminded that members who are introducing visitors or guests should limit themselves to briefly stating the names and the relevant facts about the individuals being introduced. Keep in mind that this should normally not take more than 30 seconds. We do tend to allow a little bit longer time for visitors who are official visitors to the province, and these introductions, of course, should be as nonpartisan as you can possibly make them. In fact, there are other Legislatures such as in Ontario where they only allow five minutes total for any introductions of anyone. You can imagine where that would put us if we were to try to stick to a rule like that. Frequently our introductions stretch into 15 minutes.

With respect to the tabling of returns and reports if we look at how Ottawa and other places like that apply this function, there are very rigid conventions that govern this aspect as to what may be tabled and also by whom things might be tabled. We in Alberta are very generous in our tablings with respect to the leniency we offer to all of you, but I wouldn't want us to get too carried away.

The same would pertain to petitions. This is not a time to make political statements as such. Be short, be brief, to the point, and we will obviously have good success in that respect.

Let us move on.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The first group is school groups. Let's start with the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group of grade 6 students from the Greystone Centennial middle school in the Finance minister's constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert. They are accompanied by Mrs. Trish Spink, Mr. Bruce Colody, Mrs. Kayla Doering, Mr. Dale Johnston, Miss Richardson, Mrs. Lindsay Thornhill, Mrs. Shauna Sak, Mrs. Gale Sulier, Mrs. Shelley Quenneville, Mrs. Marnie Hebert, Ms Ceone Fournier, and Ms Leanne Tobert. They are seated in both the public and members' galleries this afternoon, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I'm immensely proud of my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, and one of the reasons is that we've got a number of educational opportunities and programs. We have some guests from one of those programs with us in the public gallery today. The program is called Careers in Transition. I believe there are four participants in the program here today, and they're led by their teacher/group leader, Mr. Allan Carlson. I would ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?

Seeing none, let us move on to the Deputy Premier for your introduction, please.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of collaboration I will keep it down to five minutes. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a fantastic postsecondary institution leader. Three years ago Dr. Elizabeth Cannon was appointed the eighth president and vice-chancellor of the University of Calgary. Dr. Cannon is a passionate voice for higher education in our province, someone whose advice I definitely value a great deal, and a phenomenal role model for women in engineering, being an engineer herself. Accompanying Dr. Cannon today is John Alho, associate vice-president for government and community engagement. Again, a very valuable member of the U of C team. I'm happy to welcome them here to the Legislature today. I had a brief meeting with them earlier, and I hope that they will enjoy the proceedings of question period. I would ask them to rise and receive your welcome.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure and an honour today to rise in the House and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some very, very special people. I will be joined later by my colleague the associate minister with another introduction. Today we're introducing Bill 30, the Building Families and Communities Act, and in doing so, we want to say thank you to the chairs of the CFSAs, the child and family services authorities, and the chairs of the PDD Boards.

I would like to introduce some of the chairs, not all of the chairs but most of the chairs, of the CFSA boards across the province who are here with us today and ask the House to say thank you in a very special way for the service they have provided. They are dedicated to serving their communities by working tirelessly to address issues and needs that affect the lives of vulnerable children and families. I'd ask them to rise as I mention their names. From the southwestern Alberta CFSA we have Sharon Holtman and Tom Wickersham. Kathy Cooper joins us from the southeast region. John Phillips is here from the Calgary and area region and Christine Moore from the central Alberta region. East-central is represented by Shelly Pewapsonias – I promised her I'd say it right – and Iris Larson. Louise Charach joins us from the Edmonton and area region, and Audrey Franklin is here from the north-central Alberta CFSA. From the northwest region we have Karen Egge and Wendy Goulet. Tracy Czuy McKinnon joins us from the northeast region.

Also with us, Mr. Speaker, from the Department of Human Services are two representatives of the many people in Human Services that have been involved in this process, Harriet Switzer and Tracy Wyrstiuk. They're in the public gallery.

I'd ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome and thank you of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four representatives from our persons with developmental disabilities boards. We have six PDD regions in the province, which you would be well aware of, all served by dedicated boards who are committed to helping Albertans with developmental disabilities live rewarding lives in their community. Today Jill Bushrod is joining us from the central region, Blair Lundy from the Edmonton region, the northeast region is represented by Glenn Hennig, and Jane Manning is here from northwest PDD. To them and through them to all of the board members and staff back in the regions I offer my sincerest thanks, and I'd ask that the House join me in offering the traditional warm welcome.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through to all members of the Assembly six participants in the 2013 Shanghai scholarship council exchange program with the University of Alberta. Nineteen of the brightest professors from 19 different universities in Shanghai were selected to participate in this program, representing a range of fields such as engineering, music, and political science. They have spent three months with various faculties at the U of A, learning Canadian teaching styles as well as exchanging ideas on how to best facilitate research flows between these education institutions. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would like to ask that they please rise as I call their names: Ms Liyuan Xing, Ms Ping Miao, Ms Zhonghong Yan, Ms Hong Zhang, Ms Yan Wang, Ms Dongjie Niu. I ask all members to please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guests from the Coalition for Action on Post-Secondary Education. They are here today to voice their opposition to this PC government's harmful cuts to postsecondary education in Alberta, and they bring with them over a thousand letters from Albertans concerned about cuts to postsecondary. The letters, students, staff, and faculty at the U of A speak about the detailed impacts the cuts have on the university, and they are calling on the government to restore funding so that all Albertans may reap the benefits of postsecondary education and academic research in the province. I would now ask that my guests rise as I call their names: William Anselmi, Brent Bellamy, Micah Cooper, Derriett Mason, and Carolyn Sale. I ask that the Assembly join me in giving them their traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Red Deer-North.

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a resident of Calgary-Glenmore, Daryl Leinweber. Daryl was born and raised in Calgary, where he is currently the executive director of the Calgary Minor Soccer Association. Daryl is a passionate advocate of volunteerism and has also shared his time and energy with Scouts Canada and various hockey schools involving NHL coaches and players on the Tsuu T'ina reserve. Daryl has received numerous national and provincial volunteer awards, including the gold-level Duke of Edinburgh award, the Alberta centennial medal for community engagement, and the Alberta Soccer Association special recognition award, to name a few. I would now ask Daryl to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the Associate Minister of Regional Recovery and Reconstruction for Southwest Alberta.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, today I have the distinct privilege of introducing to you and through you to the members of this House a very good friend and a great citizen. Christine Moore is here today as the co-chair for the central Alberta CFSA. She is the past chairperson for the Red Deer Catholic school board and has just been elected to her first term as municipal councillor for the county of Red Deer. Christine is the producer and director for the annual Celebrity Dance-Off, which is Red Deer's very successful version of *Dancing with the Stars*. Having emigrated to Canada from England with her husband, David, over 20 years ago, they have three wonderful children and feel very fortunate to live in Canada and especially in Alberta. I would say that we are even more fortunate to have her among us. Christine is in the members' gallery, and I would ask her to rise and accept the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you two individuals. The first one is Mr. Drew Brown. Drew is an executive director of Saint Jude's Health Management Institute, a small volunteer-driven registered charity helping people in Calgary and area reach their potential by connecting them to resources. He and his volunteer group provide case management, system navigation, community collaboration, and advocacy for Saint Jude's clients. He's also the chair of the family sector of the action committee on housing and homelessness, and he's been a very good friend for a long time of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

The second individual I want to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the rest of the Assembly is a gentleman who is a fourth-year political science student at the University of Calgary, who is doing a co-op term in my office as a ministerial intern. He came on as I was posted as associate minister of recovery and reconstruction, so he's been travelling around between two communities in the southwest portion of the province, even giving me the occasional break behind the wheel, Mr. Speaker.

I know that you said that this is supposed to be nonpartisan, so I will say that these individuals were instrumental in my political endeavours and in allowing me to be in this House as well. So if I could get both of them to stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Local Decision-making

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we know this PC government just doesn't care about local autonomy. The evidence is overwhelming. We've seen it in land-use bills that extinguish landowner rights, we've seen it with the elimination of local health authorities, concentrating power in a giant bureaucracy, and we've seen it in the countless examples of government ministers and staff bullying and intimidating locally elected representatives. Their brazen contempt and disregard for local decision-makers is, quite frankly, astonishing.

But in this session they are taking it to a new low. Bill 28, the Modernizing Regional Governance Act, might be the most heavy-handed, draconian, and regressive piece of municipal legislation ever conceived in this Assembly. As it is currently written, it will strip away whatever semblance of local autonomy we have left. Essentially, it gives provincially appointed planning boards complete and total control over the planning activities of municipalities. Municipalities won't be able to make a bylaw, pass a resolution, enter into an agreement, or undertake a public work improvement, structure, or other thing if it disagrees with the decisions of these planning boards. Participation and co-operation with these overlord boards is mandatory. Municipalities that don't submit to them will face stiff fines; their senior managers will face jail time. Plans approved by the overlord boards will be in full compliance with another draconian piece of legislation, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, and will override any municipal planning strategies currently in place.

On top of it all, Mr. Speaker, they're rolling it out without consultation at a time when newly elected municipal officials are just being sworn into office. Before some new mayors, reeves, and councillors have even set up their offices, this government is fundamentally and unilaterally changing how they will do the jobs they were elected to do.

It's sneaky, it's offensive, and it's just plain wrong. Mr. Speaker, if this government was looking to pick a fight, they've picked one. The Wildrose Official Opposition will fight tooth and nail against this legislation.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Speaker was struggling to hear parts of that member's statement, so please let's be respectful of each other while these members' statements are being delivered.

Government Accountability

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, Albertans and other Canadians are increasingly dismayed and disgusted by a federal government and a Prime Minister that trample not only on our democratic traditions but also on principles of transparency, openness, and

honesty. Secrecy has replaced openness. Spin has replaced truth. Cynicism has replaced integrity.

While the Senate expense scandal has brought these sordid practices into sharp focus, Canadians were already too familiar with the antidemocratic doctrine of Harperism. But Harperism is not limited to the federal Conservative government in Ottawa. It is alive and well right here in Alberta. Under this Premier Harperism has taken root in our province. Secrecy, disregard for the law, contempt for the people's elected representatives, and the sacrifice of anyone who has become a political liability are hallmarks not only of Stephen Harper but also of this Premier.

When the Privacy Commissioner ruled that the PCs had to release information about severance packages paid to the Premier's office staff, the Premier simply said that she would not comply. Then when a judge ruled that the government's secret policy of barring environmental groups from hearings on oil sands projects violated the law, the Premier's government announced that they would simply disregard the ruling.

Instead of outlining her government's plans before the elected representatives of the people of Alberta in a throne speech, this Premier chose to do it at an \$85-a-plate lunch at the Chamber of Commerce. The symbolism could not be more clear. This Premier chooses to be accountable to the business community, not to the people of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have to go to Ottawa to see Harperism at work. This Premier and her office are master practitioners in ignoring judges and privacy commissioners alike, keeping major government policy secret, and throwing former friends and allies under the bus when it suits her. This Premier presides over the most secretive government in Canada, and Albertans deserve much, much better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm going to begin with the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition. However, we had a computer malfunction in my office, and I don't have a list of other questioners today. Hopefully, that'll be rectified soon, and I will get a copy of that delivered to me at the dais as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, let us begin.

Regional Governance

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be completely in love with top-down processes, centralization, and one-way, you-listen-to-me consultations. This week we have learned that they wish to completely overhaul regional governance and create unelected municipal overlords that will strip away local autonomy and independence from our municipalities. Now, my question is not about the bill. It's about the consultation process. To the Premier: which municipalities told her that they wanted PC government appointees controlling their affairs?

Ms Redford: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, no one did, because that's not what this legislation does. We work very hard, as you know, with mayors of communities across this province, evidenced by the work that we do with AUMA, AAMD and C, certainly the work that this incredible Minister of Municipal Affairs has done in the past six months. We look to the Capital Region Board, the Calgary Regional Partnership, and communities to ensure that we are working in partnership. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right. This will change the relationship between municipalities and the provincial government for the better because we

have modern communities with strong leaders that want to build Alberta, just like us.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the mayors we're talking to have gone ballistic.

This government seems determined to enshrine these municipal overlords in record time. As near as we can tell, the AUMA, the AAMD and C, and no municipalities were consulted on these boards, and the government wants them established and enshrined into legislation by next week. Why is the Premier in such a hurry to place PC government appointees in charge over locally elected officials?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I've had to contact a lot of mayors, too, just to undo the myths and rumours and, actually, quite frankly, frightening language that this member uses. In 2007 the Working Together group put together the regulations for the Capital Region Board. This legislation that we're introducing, which is what they're talking about, is a mirror image of that. Nothing has changed. We're simply putting in legislation what we were already doing in regulation to support the Capital Region Board in doing the good work it's doing for the region.

Ms Smith: The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation doesn't just apply to the capital region. In fact, these new municipal overlords will have incredible powers over locally elected officials. Mayors and reeves who don't kowtow to the province's overlord appointees could face jail time and five-figure personal fines. When the Premier was consulting on this idea, can she tell us which mayors and reeves suggested that they be jailed or fined for not going along with the government's edicts?

Mr. Griffiths: Here we go, Mr. Speaker. They're specifically referring to the legislation that's coming forward. I can once again say that the Doug Radke-led report that formed the Capital Region Board to begin with created this regulation. What we're talking about now is an exact mirror image. Our own regulations under 603 say that it can only be regulation for a few years and then it has to move into legislation. That's what we're doing. These members not only work to make sure that municipal councillors are terrified and afraid, but I have countless examples of where they bully and intimidate and attack publicly for building libraries, for making decisions about airports. We will not take decisions or information from them about how to work with municipalities.

The Speaker: Hon. leader, your second main set of questions.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. minister's phone is going to be ringing off the hook.

Severance Payments to Premier's Office Staff

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked a direct question of the Premier regarding severance for her former chief of staff, specifically, if the \$130,000 payment was the only payment he received from her office upon his departure. Instead of answering a direct question, the Premier stayed true to form and avoided providing any useful information whatsoever. So to the Premier once again: was \$130,000 as a payment to her ex-chief of staff the only payment he received when he left her office?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, in fact, that is not what the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday. She made wild allegations that were unfounded. We are absolutely committed to full transparency for all of our senior staff. We're putting that policy in place. It will be

very clear, it will be comprehensive, and it will be something that Albertans can trust. That will be our answer when we release all of that information.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, because the Premier refuses to confirm that the \$130,000 was the only payment, Albertans are left with the strong suspicion that the total number was, in fact, a lot higher. We see a pattern with this government: a revolving door for its staff, particularly at the highest levels, followed by millions of dollars in severance payouts. Will the Premier commit today to releasing full and detailed severance information for all of the political staff that have fled her office since she became Premier?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, we made that commitment two weeks ago. We're putting that system in place. I'm sorry if the hon. member has concerns, but I know that we're confident in the work that we will do. If there is any reason that Albertans have those questions, it's because this leader stands up day after day producing stunts, does not contribute to a discussion that builds this province or gives anyone confidence in that future, and that's what we should be talking about in this House.

Ms Smith: The reason I ask every day, Mr. Speaker, is because the Premier refuses to answer the question every single day.

The whole affair is hard to swallow for everyday Alberta families, who work hard and pay their taxes. They want to see their tax dollars spent on programs to help those who need it most, not gold-plated severance packages for political staffers. Does the Premier recognize how her actions have damaged the people's trust in her and her government, and will she commit to finally ending the practice of solid gold severances?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, in fact, as we said, we're going to provide all of the information in terms of a comprehensive package with respect to existing contracts, previous contracts, and contracts for the future. That is what Albertans want, and that's what we're going to give them.

But I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is committed to building Alberta, to investing in families and communities as opposed to the opposition, who would take \$5 billion out of the operating budget this year. So it's rather ironic for the Leader of the Opposition to stand up and talk about wanting more money invested in programs for Albertans when she wants to cut \$5 billion out of the budget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Flood-related School Construction

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, parents are getting tired of this government playing politics with our kids. Today we learn that the government is going to spend \$1.1 million on a new temporary gym in the Premier's riding when an underused gym is right next door. Now, that brings the price tag of this temporary school project to more than \$5 million when simply busing these kids to a school 12 minutes away would make much more sense. Taxpayers are again scratching their heads. To the Premier. This decision pits kids, communities, and parents against each other, and you know that. Why did your government do this?

Ms Redford: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the only person I've heard today doing that is the hon. member. We faced a tragedy on the 20th of June, and individuals across this province were affected. We made a commitment to work with communities in partnership to identify their needs and to make sure that we were supporting

them so that as families and communities we could rebuild and get back to normal as soon as possible. It shouldn't be a news flash to this member that building schools and communities is exactly what we need to do. We have ministers who've been working closely with community leaders in High River and Calgary, doing the work that needs to be done, and I'm very proud of how they're rebuilding Alberta.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, given that we have a desperate need for schools, modulars, and modernizations from one end of this great province to the other, we need this Premier to explain to all these people on the list that are waiting for these projects: how can you spend more than \$5 million on an unnecessary temporary school gym and school while leaving so many others scrambling for your mercy and spare change?

2:00

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it would be very interesting to hear what the parents in Calgary would like to say to that response, when he tells them that their facilities are unnecessary after this flood. The reality is that when this flood hit, our Premier acted immediately. We went out to school boards and said: "What do you need? What do you need for your students? We don't care who their MLA is. We don't care how wealthy they are. We don't care what colour they are. What do they need to be ready for school in September?" Those school boards and those communities came back to us and told us what they needed, and we're delivering it.

Mr. McAllister: I think we can dispute that.

Given that students in High River have to take gym classes in banquet halls and in school fields outside of the schools as they wait for portables, after broken promises and missed deadlines yet again from this government, Premier, is it right to direct more than \$5 million to this project in your own riding, when a much better and smarter alternative exists, while flood-affected families in High River are quite literally left out in the cold? It sure looks like you're playing favourites.

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, that's great drama, but it's just short on facts. The one I've got to correct is with respect to his claims about High River. You know, I would recommend that the member actually talk to some of the school boards. This flood is four months old, and they wait until today to bring it up? Let me give you the quote that went from Christ the Redeemer school board to the *Herald* yesterday in response to that claim about gym space. "Our PE situation improves dramatically as we have access to the Notre Dame gym which was phased for early completion and available now. We didn't need a temporary structure as the gym is available and far superior." Well, unfortunately, the *Herald* chose not to report that.

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

Health Care Wait Times

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose refer to the Fraser Institute report on health wait times while the Health minister takes comfort in the CIHI report. Well, I like to look at AHS reports. Unfortunately, however, AHS's latest quarterly performance report due at the end of September has yet to be released. To the Premier: what is the expected wait time for the wait times report?

Ms Redford: You know, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister has said in this House in the last week, we're absolutely committed to building a public health care system that improves the quality of life of Albertans. [interjections] Over the past year and a half the work that we've been able to do to shorten wait times has been very important, and I'm very proud of the work that the front-line workers have done in Alberta Health Services to ensure that that happens. As our minister says, we will always strive to do better – we have seen constant improvement – and that is what we will continue to do.

I will just take a moment to say: can we please keep some of this in perspective? Let's keep in perspective the fact that if we're really honest with ourselves, Albertans tell us that they get care when they need it and they have confidence in the health care system. [interjections] So let's keep it in perspective, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Let's also keep in perspective some of the rules. There are just too many interjections going on.

Let's go. Your first supplemental, hon. leader.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the Premier needs to exercise the art of listening. The question was: where's the report?

Well, Mr. Speaker, results in five major wait time categories were rather consistent in the previous four AHS reports. For example: hip surgery, failed; knee surgery, failed; cardiac surgery, failed; seniors in hospitals waiting for long-term care, failed; emergency wait times – you guessed it – failed. To the Premier: I imagine you wouldn't want to be embarrassed heading into your leadership review. [interjections] Is that why this report is being delayed?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, it's evident what the facts may bring. [interjections] I'll read out some of the recent facts on wait times in Alberta, including a 9 per cent reduction in hip surgery wait times, a 15 per cent reduction in knee replacements, a 22 per cent reduction in cataract surgeries, 10 per cent for bypass surgeries, and being set to reduce cornea replacement wait times from three years to 14 weeks. Facts.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we are spending \$5 billion more today compared to five years ago – the population has only gone up 11 per cent – and we're failing.

Speaking of wait times, according to the most recent EMS performance measures 50 per cent of the time in Edmonton when Albertans call 911, ambulances arrive late in life-threatening emergency cases. This is in Edmonton. Can you imagine how bad it is in Grande Prairie or Fort Mac? To the Premier: why should the odds of an ambulance arriving on time when your life is in danger be about the same as winning a coin toss, 50-50?

Mr. VanderBurg: Again, Mr. Speaker, it's been very clear ever since I've been an MLA that we've invested more in health care than any other province across this country, and ever since that point we've grown in our population and demands have increased. [interjections] I'm very, very proud in rural Alberta – I live in rural Alberta – of the care that we get from our professionals in health services. [interjections] And we continue to increase those investments in health care as we speak.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if you continue with these interjections, I'm going to stand and allow whomever is asking the question or giving the answer additional time, which means two or three or four people will drop off the list. I know you don't want that. So, please, let's tighten things up.

The leader of the New Democratic opposition.

Medical Laboratory Services

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier responded to my question about the privatization of medical lab services by saying, and I quote: it isn't happening. But it is. This Alberta Health Services document, which I will table, proves it. To the Premier. Her answer yesterday is contradicted by the facts. Will she now confirm that AHS is indeed going ahead with a \$3 billion contract to a single corporation to privatize lab services in Edmonton?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I will absolutely confirm that we are going to consider everything we can to make health care more effective, and there is not a chance that we are going to exclude any option. I find it incredible that this member is so concerned about sole sourcing contracts or one-person monopolies when the only thing that their party believes in is nothing but fully funded public health care that is only delivered in some of the ways that are most connected to the traditional, old-fashioned public health care system. We can look to new models, we can ensure public safety, and we can make sure that we continue to build a health care system that Albertans have confidence in regardless of what this member says.

The Speaker: The hon. New Democratic leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, if you know how the Premier puts things, that answer I'm going to take as a definite yes. And it's certainly true that the NDP is in support of public health care, unlike this government.

AHS employees have been told that three corporations have been prequalified to bid for this contract. One of those corporations, LabCorp of the United States, had to repay \$187 million for billing U.S. Medicare for unnecessary blood tests and another 49 and a half million dollars to the state of California because of false claims to the state's medicaid program. Are these the people you want running our health system?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I think that if those companies, that I know nothing about, did something wrong, they should pay back the money.

Mr. Mason: Oh, and so should Mike Duffy.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier is too clever by half because the question is: is this government prepared to award a \$3 billion contract to a corporation with this kind of track record?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the fact that this hon. member is suggesting that this government would do that is ridiculous. We know that we want to make sure that we provide and contract and support the best possible services for patient safety regardless of what they are. We are committed to public health care. We promised Albertans that we would continue to improve health care, that we would fund health care publicly, that people could have confidence in it, and that is what they can trust.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. Let's keep the preambles hereafter out of the supplementaries.

I'm sorry. You had one more question?

Mr. Mason: I do. Actually, I have several, but I probably can only have one.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims . . .

The Speaker: Oh, no. Hang on. My counting was correct. We have you down as one main and two sups. Okay. Apology accepted. Thank you.

Let's move on, then, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by Highwood.

School Construction Priorities

Mr. Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, my first question is to the Minister of Education. We won this last election with the promise to build and modernize schools for our children. I'm so thankful to see the momentum and progress being made to build 50 new schools and upgrade 70 schools in our beautiful province. These promises have helped put the people's trust in me and this government. Right now northeast Edmonton is one of the fastest growing communities within our capital city. Therefore, my question is this: when can Edmonton-Manning expect to see new schools being built?

2:10

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it's a good question. It's a question many communities around the province are asking. I commend the member for being a strong advocate for his community. I would encourage him to work with his local school board because one of the most important things is to make sure that the schools that are important to his constituents are on the capital list of the local school boards which they submit to us. They redid those over the last year, and they sent those in to us in about the June, July timeframe. Our capital planning group has been working on what the priorities across the province are. We're a little bit behind because there have been a lot of demands over the summer, as you can well imagine, on that capital planning group.

Mr. Sandhu: My second question is also to the same minister. Given that Dr. Donald Massey school was full as soon as it opened in 2010 and only two of the four requested modulars were received last year, when can we expect to receive the other two modulars? They are so badly needed for my riding.

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we've got real demands for modulars all over the province. We have a budget to deliver about 40 a year. We got requests last year for about 400, so we upped the budgets. We were able to deliver about a hundred. To give you a sense, these things take between six and eight months to put together and build and deliver. Many of the modulars that were ordered back in April are still not delivered yet to schools around the province.

Now, those hundred don't include the 54 that we ordered very quickly for the floods. I can say that all of those 54 are on-site, and we already have 400 kids in those 54. We're well on our way to accommodating the flood victims, but we need to do more work for the rest of the province.

Mr. Sandhu: To the same minister. We have old schools like Father Leo Green that need to be updated. When can we expect to see this happen for my riding?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'd say, "Stay tuned," and I'd remind the member to make sure that he's working with his local school board to make sure that that's a priority for them and that that's on their capital list as well.

We did announce 28 new schools and two modernizations in the spring. We anticipate announcing a long list of modernizations here by the end of the calendar year and then another list of new schools in the new year. We're working on those lists right now.

I'm very grateful that we've got a Premier who's building the province by investing in families and communities. Those 50 new schools and 70 modernizations are going to go a long way towards that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by Calgary-East.

Health Care Wait Times (continued)

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health minister just keeps on digging himself a bigger hole on health care wait times. Yesterday after a miserable attempt at spinning his government's dismal record on wait times, the minister trotted out the excuses. He argued that every province in Canada is having trouble with wait times, so it should come as no surprise that Alberta is, too. Now, again, I cannot fathom that the Health minister wouldn't know the real facts. The question I have is: is he going to stick to his excuses, or does he again need to be told the facts?

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will not apologize for the improvements that we've made in wait times. The facts are: 9 per cent reduction in hip surgeries, 15 per cent reduction in knee replacements, 22 per cent reduction in cataract surgeries, 10 per cent reduction in bypass surgeries, and set to reduce cornea replacement wait times from three years to 14 weeks.

Ms Smith: More excuses, Mr. Speaker. Why am I not surprised? Here again are the real facts. Hip replacement waits: Ontario, 192 days; B.C., 216 days; Alberta, 245 days. Cataract surgery: Ontario, 128 days; B.C., 148 days; Alberta, 209 days. Bypass surgery: Saskatchewan, 19 days; Alberta, 84 days. That is the worst in the country. To the minister: what's his excuse?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that 24 months ago Albertans decided whose facts to take to the Legislature, and I'll stand by that.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, with example after example of ridiculous wait times, I am sure the minister is starting to see why we need the Wildrose patient wait time guarantee. It's pretty simple. If you're on a wait-list past what is medically recommended, you get treated using Alberta's out-of-province fund. Will the minister agree today to stop the pain and suffering caused by his government's excessive wait times and implement our wait time guarantee?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to is further streamlining our system so we improve access to wait times and improve health care for all Albertans. Four million Albertans expect the best out of this system, and so does this government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

Calgary Southwest Ring Road

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we found out that the government had an agreement with the Tsuu T'ina Nation that would allow for the building of the southwest portion of Calgary's ring road. Media reports have suggested that there are still some potential hurdles to overcome. Could the Minister of Transportation please inform this House what these hurdles are and when all of this is to be completed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently we're in a seven-day appeal period. Following that, we hope to get a date, and we hope by the end of November to sign the agreement. After that, we will continue to work with the Tsuu T'ina Nation and the federal government to complete the processes necessary under the government of Canada for the land transfer so that we can move forward. Once all the processes are complete, of course, we'll begin construction, but we'll try not to waste that time. In the meantime planning, engineering, design work will be undertaken because we know this is a piece of infrastructure that's important to the Tsuu T'ina, the city of Calgary, and all of Alberta, and it's part of this Premier's mandate to build Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Tsuu T'ina had the opportunity to review the entire agreement before voting. When do Albertans get to see the agreement and have their say on it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that. To the hon. member: Albertans had their say last year at the election. They had one of their says, but they're not finished having their say. The agreements and the maps are posted on the Alberta Transportation website, and they were posted there last Friday, which was the first day that we could actually say that we had an agreement because that's the day the chief announced that the members of the band had voted in favour. At that point and only at that point did we have an agreement. We'll continue to share information with Albertans. I have to say that the southwest ring road is a big priority, and we intend to get to . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the same minister. Can the minister tell this House what is going to happen to the Weaselhead natural area as a result of this road being built through it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We are currently completing an agreement with the city of Calgary to obtain a corner of the Weaselhead park in order to facilitate the building of the southwest part of the ring road. Additionally, we'll be relocating a utility high-pressure gas line and overhead electrical lines. In other words, we're taking those out of the Weaselhead area, which we think will make it better and benefit that area.

The ring road is a good investment. We're building Alberta, and under the Premier's leadership we will make transportation better for the Tsuu T'ina, Calgarians, and all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

PDD Supports Intensity Scale Assessments

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spring of 2013 this government was under fire for its cuts to the PDD system. The associate minister of PDD toured the province and heard first-hand about the fear, the mistrust that this government created by poorly communicating its plan to transform the delivery of services to vulnerable Albertans. Barely a week went by without a

protest here at the Legislature or in front of the Premier's office. One of the major problems was the rolling out and administration of the supports intensity scale, or SIS. Can the minister tell the House today how many SIS assessments have been completed?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, as of about a little over a week ago we were at 75 per cent. I would think that we're at about 80 per cent right at the moment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, I would never suggest that this minister intentionally misled the House, but given that on May 7 of this year, in a response to a very similar question that I asked him, he said, "Over 80 per cent of the PDD clients in Alberta have had an assessment already," how could this minister be so out of touch with the numbers in his own portfolio?

Mr. Oberle: Let's make sure we're talking about the same numbers, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member would know because he attended some of the sessions, we committed to do a number of reassessments, and that's what we're doing. That's why we're at the current number, and that's the correct number today.

2:20

Mr. Wilson: Facts are facts, Mr. Speaker. Given that six months ago the number was over 80 per cent and according to a report that this minister just referred to, that was issued just days ago, which notes that it's only 77 per cent, how is it possible that after months of hard work and additional hires in the PDD system to complete this assessment, the actual completion rate went down?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I think I just shared the numbers as they stand today, as I understand them today. I guess they're getting their numbers from the same place that they got their health care waiting list numbers. He can take it from me what the numbers are.

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

Environmental Protection

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is in trouble. More and more people in and out of Alberta are rejecting the Premier's sunny op-eds about reducing greenhouse gases as having little relation to the truth and, instead, are pointing to the snaillike approach to achieving environmental protection. In the Cold Lake area CNRL's Primrose in situ site is weeping bitumen out of the ground. It took weeks to detect the leak, weeks more to even fess up, and they can't staunch it. To the minister of the environment: does the minister now acknowledge that thorough and accelerated groundwater mapping would have allowed us to know now faster that Primrose had contaminated our water?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that when the incident happened at Primrose, not only was the Alberta Energy Regulator on the scene right away but also the Minister of Energy and myself to make sure that we were on the scene to see what was happening. We continue to do the groundwater mapping in this province. That's important for us. We've been doing that. This incident is under control. We have

been on the scene to make sure that CNRL is responsible and are moving forward to the cleanup of this issue.

Ms Blakeman: It took three weeks to even put out a media release.

Does the government or industry have any idea or, better yet, any science on how many other times this leakage or this type of leakage has occurred, especially given the extreme remoteness of exploration and steam-injection sites?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We take the regulatory process in this province through the Alberta Energy Regulator and through ESRD extremely seriously, and that's why we were on-site right away to make sure, the regulator, the Energy minister, and the environment minister.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we made sure that an environmental protection order was put in place so that we could take care of the habitat, take care of the water that was there. We have been on this file from day one, and we will continue to be on this file to make sure that the cleanup happens and that the environment is protected.

Ms Blakeman: Would the minister care to comment on the science from the federal emissions trends report which indicates that Alberta won't meet its climate change targets and is actually set to steadily increase greenhouse gas emissions at the same that we have a Premier writing op-eds saying that we have reduced them and that our environmental record is better than it is? Where's the science on that?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be very happy to answer this question. We have reduced greenhouse gas emissions. About 40 million tonnes of greenhouse gases have been reduced since 2007 levels. We have reduced per barrel greenhouse gases by 26 per cent. You show me anywhere else that has reduced emissions per barrel like Alberta has done.

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

Seniors' Drug Coverage

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A universal seniors' pharmacare plan would improve public health, save public money, and provide peace of mind for all. The Alberta New Democrat caucus knows this to be true. Alberta seniors know this, too, and together we are prepared to fight for what's right. Twice now this PC government has tried to attack these goals, and twice we have fought back and delayed a deeply flawed PC seniors' pharmacy scheme. To the Associate Minister of Seniors: when will your government stop threatening Alberta seniors with private insurance, extra-billing, and means testing and start building a universal pharmacare program?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Nobody knows, other than the seniors in this province, that there are programs like no other across this country for seniors in Alberta. Whether it's the seniors' benefit program, the special-needs program, the optical program, the dental program, there are no other programs across Canada that are even close to what we offer in Alberta. We'll continue to make those investments when it's the right time with the right approach.

Mr. Eggen: Well, that's very interesting, Mr. Speaker.

Given that this government said that they would take \$180 million out of seniors' pharmacy and given that the only way you could make that money up is by taking that money out of seniors' pockets, will this minister now tell Albertans that this government will go back to the drawing board so that they will not gouge seniors with extra-billing, expensive insurance, and hidden costs?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, all of the time all of the programs that we have in this province are geared to low-income and vulnerable Albertans. We'll continue to make sure that all vulnerable citizens regardless of age are protected under any plan going forward. There's no concrete pharmaceutical plan in place as of yet. That discussion will happen with the Health minister when it's the right time.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that all of this uncertainty is making it very difficult for people to plan for retirement and given that private, for-profit drug lobbyists such as Hal Danchilla have been circling around this place like sharks ever since government planned to make seniors pay more for their prescriptions through means testing, will this minister please let us know when this government will park their private ideology at the door and start building a universal pharmacare program that we all can count on?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister has made it very clear that about 20 per cent of Albertans have no health coverage at all for pharmaceuticals. The intention of all of our programs is to make sure that the vulnerable, low-income Albertans are always covered.

Mr. Eggen: Everyone should be covered.

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, I said that all Albertans that are vulnerable and low income will always be covered with the programs that we offer.

Thank you.

Crop Insurance for Flood Damage

Mr. Donovan: Mr. Speaker, the horrific June floods brought out the best in Albertans. First responders, community members, and friends and families banded together to help one another during these most trying times. The aftermath of this tragedy has been far reaching, but I've spoken to many Albertans who feel this government has ignored some of their concerns. One of these individuals is Jeff Callahan. Jeff is a hard-working farmer whose land was used to pump flood water out of High River. While he understands that this was a necessary measure to save homes, he has now been denied crop insurance coverage. To the minister of agriculture: what is being done to ensure that farmers are being fairly compensated for flood damages?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. There's no doubt that rural Albertans and people in the agricultural industry were greatly affected by this. Having said that, we were also lucky because it was a great crop year in many ways. I know that when I have flown down over southern Alberta, it's been pointed out to me that when you look at the irrigation area, you can't tell the difference between the area where the pivot is and the corner areas because of the great moisture we've had. Really, it's been a good year for crops.

This is a question about insurance coverage. AFSC has been very active and aggressive in addressing concerns by people such as . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've seen pictures of his combine stuck in the overwet areas, which I understand are needed. Why has this government been unwilling to help this farmer with his problems on this? Could we not do a spot claim? It could be a hail or fire claim.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised this issue with me before, and I have spoken to AFSC about it. My understanding is that he does have insurance coverage, and I think that's one of the principles of what we're talking about. When we're rebuilding in the aftermath of this flood, the first place you look to is insurance. He does have insurance coverage, maybe not the kind of coverage he would have preferred, but he had bought coverage, and AFSC is perfectly willing to support him with the coverage that he has.

Mr. Donovan: Mr. Speaker, I'm a farmer, and I understand how the coverage works. The problem with that is that it's taking out his whole average. His average has been built up. He loses 20 per cent of his farm, and he gets no money because he had such a great crop on the rest. How are you going to help these farmers and other farmers in the area that need the help from the flood damage?

Mr. Olson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that's where we get to a discussion about disaster recovery. The disaster recovery program is meant to step in where there is no insurance. We've been very aggressive in addressing issues where people don't have any insurance coverage at all. Where people do have insurance coverage, that's the first place that we rely on. The hon. member, as I said, has raised this issue with me before, and I'm perfectly happy to continue the discussion with him.

2:30 Flood-related School Construction (continued)

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, I'm not done with the Sprung structure issue. This morning the *Calgary Herald* reported that the Minister of Education made the decision to build the Sprung gymnasium structure for students from the Premier's riding who were displaced by the floods. To the Minister of Education: was this decision made because the students of the school are located in a richer area with strong political ties, and were you playing favourites with provincial money?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, we don't play politics with our students. We've put students first through this whole ordeal, and it's unfortunate that some would pit neighbour against neighbour during this. I'm proud to say that we've got a Premier that has been along the lines of Alberta's culture, which is that we take care of our neighbours.

Now, in this situation, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for folks to know that the local school boards and the local communities are making these decisions on what the proposals are for solutions, and they're bringing those to us. We're responding to those. We've told them through this flood: whatever you need, we'll be there; we want those kids in school in September, and we're there to support those kids.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, to the associate minister for recovery and reconstruction of High River. I thought of the High River

students as they were mentioned in the previous question. They were maybe led to believe that they were the priority. Why aren't those kids provided with the same opportunity and access to this Sprung structure?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we saw in June was an unprecedented disaster. Through this family-focused leadership of our Premier we've seen unprecedented leadership. Right now in High River we have 400 kids in 26 modulars, with 16 more on the way. We've seen a hundred thousand people evacuated from this disaster, and we have 90 per cent of those people back in their homes.

Speaking of Sprung structures, in the town of High River we have approximately \$3.6 million worth of those structures aiding the town in a library, a town structure, including a downtown business core, bringing businesses back online. This Premier has led by example with purpose for people.

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, the referenced article talked about \$1.1 million being an insane amount of taxpayer money. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said that. To the Minister of Infrastructure: why are we spending so much money on one structure when that money could be used to do a lot of school work in the province?

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been committed to rebuild these communities and these schools, and we've done that. Our capital plan still stands. These flood rebuilding projects are coming out of the DRP, and our original capital plans to build schools across this province still stand. It didn't affect the schools anywhere else in this province. We're committed to building 50 new schools and modernizing 70, and that's just what we're going to do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Disaster Recovery Program

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the June flooding that devastated parts of southern Alberta, the disaster relief this PC government promised to all impacted Albertans has fallen short. Charles Hazzard, for instance, a constituent of mine, watched his house being torn down with no DRP document in hand on the same day the Minister of Municipal Affairs was in Medicine Hat for a photo op. To the minister: why does he care more about photo ops than fulfilling the Premier's promise to provide disaster relief to every Albertan that needs it?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I don't go anywhere for photo ops, but it so happens that where I go, cameras show up and take pictures and the media wants interviews. That's just the way it works.

Quite frankly, there are 30 communities that have been devastated. There are over 9,000 people that made applications for the disaster recovery program. This is not just an unprecedented disaster in Alberta. This is the largest disaster the nation of Canada has ever seen, and our response has been recognized as second to none globally. We'll continue to work to serve every single person, including the Hazzards, to make sure their families are rebuilt.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, given that there are many Albertans in similar dire circumstances as Charles Hazzard waiting patiently

on the province for their disaster relief to arrive, how can the minister expect Alberta flood victims to move forward with their lives, not knowing how or when the aid his government promised will come?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, we have, I think, 10 times more people on the ground working with these folks who have had some tremendous devastating losses. We're incredibly sympathetic to the losses they have. I would highly recommend that instead of this member parading people's names and their experiences and their challenges, he actually refer them forward. I can't give him an update on the Hazzards, but I know that their file is being resolved as we speak.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, given that this PC government promised relief to all Albertans affected by this summer's flood, will this minister demonstrate that he cares enough about these victims by committing today to give written assurances to all Albertans affected by this disaster stating when and how their DRP relief will come in so that they can move on with their lives and plan their futures?

Mr. Griffiths: Here's the rub, Mr. Speaker. Instead of actually helping with resolving the cases, this member is going to parade individual cases through here. What he's asking is for us to take the several hundred people that are working on individual files and have them all stop the DRP process and write letters to everyone saying that we'll resolve it. Our folks, our hard-working, dedicated civil servants, are working around the clock to resolve every single one of these issues, and that's our commitment right here in the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Country of Origin Labelling

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, there have been some very real and ongoing concerns being raised regarding mandatory country of origin labelling, or MCOOL for short. The U.S. has enacted legislation that unfairly discriminates against Canadian producers and is impeding their ability to compete, costing Canadians, Albertans, and a lot of my constituents hundreds of millions of dollars. Beef being shipped to the U.S. must be labelled as such, but beef shipped out of the U.S. is not required to be. All of my questions are to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. What is the status of the talks regarding resolving the issue?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. As the biggest producer of beef in Canada and, I think, the third- or fourth-biggest pork producer this is a matter of great frustration for our producers, probably costing us over a billion, \$1.2 billion per year in lost revenue. We've been working on this with our other provincial colleagues and with the federal government. Of course, the federal government has the lead on this because it is a trade issue, but we have at least six resolutions being passed by state legislators in support of our position on this.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the World Trade Organization has confirmed that these rules discriminate against Canadian producers, what timelines do we have for a resolution to this matter?

Mr. Olson: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a question that we're all asking, and again it speaks to our frustration. The World Trade Organization at least twice over the last couple of years has ruled in our favour, saying that the U.S. is offside in terms of their NAFTA obligations. We have and Minister Ritz has with our support and the support of other provinces given the Americans a list of how we would intend to retaliate in terms of the commodities that we would be focusing on, and I have actually personally handed the list to some state agriculture secretaries. We don't know how long it will take, though.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are other actions that this government is taking to ensure that all Canadian and American jurisdictions are aware of these issues and to help producers work towards a more equitable solution?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been very decisive on this and has certainly mandated me and my department to be aggressive in putting our position forward. We've actually taken the lead. For example, this weekend I'm going to be heading to Chicago with Minister Ritz and with the ministers from Saskatchewan and Manitoba to meet with a group of American packers. These are people who are very sympathetic to our position because they're being hurt by these same rules, and we're trying to drum up support there.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Environmental Regulatory Process

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Environment adopted a secret policy that denied aboriginal environmental groups the right to participate in our regulatory hearing processes. Ironically, an internal memo warned that this secret policy could open the door for more extremist groups to participate and cause unnecessary legal actions. Why would this government adopt a secret policy that would deny legitimate groups and encourage more extremist groups to participate in our regulatory hearing processes?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has a very open process. The policies are very open on who has access with regard to standing at hearings with regard to the regulatory process, and those are followed. Quite frankly, since I've become the minister of environment, I have opened all the doors to make sure that all voices are heard in this province and that we have the opportunity to have everybody heard.

Mr. Anglin: Contrary to a court decision.

Given that Justice Marceau lambasted this government's secret policy and ruled it a violation of natural justice, how can this government say that it cares about Alberta's reputation when they can't even comply with their own laws?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the hon. member across the way, who wants to live in the past from a 2009 report, this government is moving forward. We have created a process under the new Alberta Energy Regulator so that for those

that do not have standing and do not have the ability on specific cases, they have a policy management office so that their voices can be heard on all areas. We are improving that regulatory process, and we are proud of that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a 2013 court decision.

Now, given that this is the second time in four years that this government has been found guilty of delaying and tainting a hearing process with bias, why should industry or our international customers, the ones we're so desperately trying to impress, trust this government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Not only can industry and Albertans trust this government, but this province of Alberta and Albertans elected us because they do trust this government. We have a solid regulatory process that has policies and procedures in place so that our directors can make decisions about the regulatory process, and we've created a new Alberta Energy Regulator, that is transparent and open, so that everyone's voice can be heard.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I deeply regret that I am not able to award any specific kudos today for no preambles to supplementals. However, I will give the given-this, given-that award to Edmonton-Calder. We'll give him that.

In 30 seconds from now we will continue with private members' statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

PDD Community Boards

Ms Kubinec: Mr. Speaker, as we heard earlier, the Human Services minister and the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities have invited some special guests from our child and family services authorities and the persons with developmental disabilities boards. I want to acknowledge the very important work of these boards and what they have accomplished over the years.

These board members have dedicated themselves to their respective organizations, fulfilling their roles with passion and commitment. The board members from the 10 regional child and family services authorities come from all walks of life and have focused their work on supporting some of the most vulnerable and youngest members of our society. The board members from the six PDD regions are to be recognized for their enduring leadership and support of adult Albertans with developmental disabilities, helping them to be part of their communities and live as independently as they can. I had the privilege of working with one of our board chairs in the northeast region PDD board.

With their experience and community networks these boards recognized that with the establishment of the ministry, more could be done to strengthen relationships and connect with communities. From collaborative discussions and workshops to involvement with stakeholder engagement, the board members have provided guidance and momentum to support change that's consistent with the direction outlined in Alberta's social policy framework. Designed by and for Albertans, the framework served as a road map for communities, governments, businesses, nonprofits, and families to work together to address social issues. More than

31,000 Albertans participated in developing this framework, and many of the CFSA and PDD board members facilitated community conversations in their regions. All of these collective efforts helped lay the groundwork for our new family and community engagement councils that the Human Services minister is proposing.

On behalf of my colleagues in government I wish to extend a thank you to these board members for their commitment to their communities, to Albertans, and most importantly to those they supported and served.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, are you ready?

Peerless Lake Centenarian

Ms Calahasen: I am ready, Mr. Speaker. There are places in the world that have been identified as a place to come from because most of these people have become close to being centenarians or are centenarians. People who come from these areas are healthy, active, and lucid individuals even in their later years. I'm so lucky to have some communities in northern Alberta whose citizens have reached centenary status. It is time to enshrine these communities in the same vein as others around the world.

Today, specifically, I would like to speak about one individual who recently turned 106 years old. According to official records Mr. George Noskiye was born in Chipewyan Lake on August 20, 1907, and lived most of his life in Peerless Lake. In fact, as of today Mr. Noskiye is the only centenarian elder in the area who has reached 106. He has lived a lifestyle many of us can only imagine, always providing for and supporting his large family as a trapper, a fisherman, and a hunter until three years ago, when at the age of 103 Mr. Noskiye moved into Manoir du Lac seniors' facility in McLennan after living alone and making sure that he was able to still provide for his family.

This is no indication that he has in any way slowed down. I attended his birthday party with his large family, where he was still talking about the things he has seen and continues to see. His fascination with modern-day life is intriguing. Although needing help to walk and move about, he is very lucid and, in fact, still joking about life.

He can look back on his life's journey with pride and accomplishment, which can also serve as an inspiration for future generations of Albertans, especially in communities like Peerless Lake. I wish Mr. Noskiye continued good health, to live longer, and to enjoy the pampering he's getting because he deserves it. I would like to say this in Cree to him: Kahmiyo pimatsin. [As submitted]

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

Calgary Christian School

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in commemoration of the Calgary Christian School, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Since 1963 the Calgary Christian School has offered a well-rounded curriculum that incorporates the teachings of the Bible in every facet of study in order to nurture and strengthen students' spirituality. Currently the school has more than 825 students and offers classes for kids from preschool to grade 12. There are over 100 denominations represented at the

school, enabling students to express their spirituality in an inclusively diverse learning environment.

Over the years Calgary Christian School has also been involved in countless philanthropic activities that help teach its students the importance of aiding those less fortunate than themselves. For instance, in June of this year its grade 6 class spearheaded the blessings bags project, with the goal of collecting, in order to provide for the homeless, a bag filled with everyday essentials such as socks, toothbrushes, granola bars, and a number of other useful items. A total of \$947 was raised by these incredibly remarkable children, and 72 bags were donated to 72 very grateful citizens.

Next year from March 24 to April 2 students will embark on a much-anticipated trip to Belize that will place a strong emphasis on faith-based service work. This trip will give students the chance to spread their goodwill and collaborate with other spiritually faithful students from another country.

Again, I would like to congratulate the Calgary Christian School for its 50th year and thank its students and families for being amazing spiritual leaders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

2:50 Unmanned Aerial Systems Industry in Southern Alberta

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two things that I truly appreciate about Cypress-Medicine Hat and Forty Mile county, the scenery of the big, blue prairie sky and the entrepreneurial spirit of our people. There's something in the works in the community of Foremost that has managed to blend a bit of both.

The Canadian Centre for Unmanned Vehicle Systems is helping to propose the establishment of airspace in the county for piloting and testing unmanned aerial systems. The opportunity of such a project speaks for itself. The unmanned aerial systems industry is rapidly evolving, and in terms of the potential for growth and investment the sky, quite literally, is the limit. The amount of business and organizations who either could use or already do use unmanned aerial vehicles is substantial and growing. We're talking of supporting police operations or eliminating risk to human life in search and rescue operations. We're talking of monitoring of pipelines or using unmanned aircraft to fight forest fires.

Other jurisdictions across the globe have already recognized the investment opportunities of unmanned vehicle systems and have acted on it. The Foremost UAS range for systems training has many of the existing requirements in place to see it become truly a global leader. The plan is to establish a thousand nautical miles of airspace so that investors and organizations from across the world can take to the southern Alberta skies.

Cypress-Medicine Hat has unfortunately been facing some struggles that most other areas in our province do not. A lot of it routes back to the questionable interference of this provincial government in 2008. Cypress-Medicine Hat's population was once growing; now it's not. Much of the blame can be placed on the natural gas royalty review, where a lot of the companies warned that they would have to stop setting up shop there if the changes went through. So there is one word of advice I could give the government here today regarding the UAS industry in southern Alberta: don't get in the way. Let's support this growing, entrepreneurial people.

Thank you.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, the first petition that I'm presenting is signed by my constituents and requests that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to increase funding for care for the elderly.

The second petition that I am presenting from my constituents requests that the government reassess how funding is provided for seniors in long-term care so that enough qualified staff can be hired.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Bill 30 Building Families and Communities Act

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it gives me great pleasure to rise to beg leave to introduce Bill 30, the Building Families and Communities Act. Bill 30 is an act which will accomplish a number of things. The Premier put together the Ministry of Human Services almost exactly two years ago to bring together all of the organizations in government that work with the human condition. We have 10 child and family services authorities boards, six PDD boards as well as six regions for Alberta Works, and we're bringing them all together. This act will create child and community engagement councils across the province, which will provide board governance and bring governance structures and engagement under the social policy framework to the Human Services area and provide assurance.

In doing so, we will disestablish the child and family services authorities and PDD boards, which have served us so well over the years. I want to take again the opportunity to thank the chairs of the CFSA and PDD boards who are with us today and through them the members of their boards both present and past because we have had very, very good service. We're actually growing off their shoulders in terms of the work that's being done, so we really appreciate that work. The efforts of the boards were actually engaged to make these changes. I want to particularly thank Louise Charach and Jeff Nish, co-chairs of a CFSA board and a PDD board together, who brought in a governance report on which this bill is based.

It's an excellent bill, Mr. Speaker, and I'd ask the House to support it in first reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

Mr. Hancock: I'm reminded, Mr. Speaker, that I should have mentioned that it's a money bill, and His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has provided his approval.

The Speaker: Thank you for that addendum.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have several here. Let's begin with Red Deer-North, followed by Edmonton-Calder and Calgary-Buffalo.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am tabling five copies each of documents signed by 114 constituents requesting that the government of Alberta increase funding for care for the elderly.

The second set of tablings: I am presenting also five copies each of documents signed by 71 constituents asking the government to reassess how funding is provided for seniors in long-term care so that enough qualified staff can be hired.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. You have two, I understand.

Mr. Eggen: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I have three. I will be very brief. The first tabling I have is signatures from an online petition calling on the government to reverse their harmful cuts to postsecondary education. The petition reads, "The PCs promised better funding for post-secondary education. But instead, they delivered a 7% cut to . . . universities and colleges."

The second tabling that I have, Mr. Speaker, is in regard to lab privatization, and I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of an op-ed piece published in this morning's *Edmonton Journal* entitled For-profit Hospital Labs Simply Don't Work. The author specializes in health policy at Carleton University and points to several times in the past where we've gone down this same road and all of the problems that have been caused.

The third tabling, Mr. Speaker, I have this afternoon is in regard to the lab privatization. Yesterday, when the leader of the New Democrat opposition questioned the Premier about her government's privatization of lab testing in Edmonton, the Premier said:

Those concerns which those professionals may have are exactly the same concerns that this minister will have and that this government will have when a decision is taken about whether or not to do what this member [is suggesting] is already happening. It isn't.

My goodness.

I would like to table a document from Alberta Health Services entitled The Future of Laboratory Services Delivery. Clearly, this government has made a decision to privatize lab services in Edmonton, and the rest of it's all just a moot, window-dressing point.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Edmonton-Centre and Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you're aware, we lost a great man in Mr. Rick Miller, former MLA in this House, last weekend. I'm just bringing a notice that was posted in the *Herald* today of some of Rick's lifelong passions and journey as well as that a service will be held at Hosanna Lutheran church on Friday, November 1, at 1 o'clock p.m., and a public celebration of Rick's life will be held on November 15 at the Delta Edmonton South between 1:30 and 5 o'clock p.m.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I understand you have four.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, I think so. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a report that my office has developed, that is giving the body of a letter that we've received from a number of individuals regarding public service pensions. We received letters from it looks like maybe 20 different people. I've listed their names as part of the report, and they are asking the government not to change the pension arrangements that currently exist.

The second tabling is from constituents Frank and Donna Horvath, the appropriate number of copies. They are very concerned about home care. They note that "by shifting patients to their homes from hospitals and then privatizing Home Care,

government is diminishing the benefits of the Canada Health Act, [and it] can be watered down at any time.”

An e-mail from Kaitlyn Dziwenka regarding education budget concerns, very concerned that this fine system is being compromised and asking for ongoing and stable funding.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the Government House Leader has caught my attention regarding the clock, and we're not quite finished our Routine.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre mid-flow, but I would ask for unanimous consent so that she can continue.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent has been requested in order to complete our Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hearing no objections, hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, please continue.

3:00

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much. An additional letter on education from Dan Scratch notes the importance of investing in children's education and, again, asks to please “provide stable, predictable and adequate funding.”

Finally, Mr. Speaker, from the University of Alberta Press, a letter from Linda D. Cameron, who is very concerned about “the consequences of rapid and wholesale shifting to eFormats for school textbooks.” She notes that “nothing in the world of technology is a sure bet, [but] ink on paper which is permanent” and that the costs of getting readers can be a barrier.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by the Minister of Education from Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with the five requisite copies of the Court of Queen's Bench decision, dated October 2013, wherein the Alberta government was found guilty of the apprehension of bias.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of an e-mail which I quoted from here earlier, which is a question from the *Calgary Herald* to Christ the Redeemer school division asking if they were offered Sprung structure for temporary gym space. The response from the superintendent from Christ the Redeemer school division to the *Herald* was that they don't need a temporary structure as they have gym space available and “far superior.” These are the quotes I talked about in question period and the quotes that the *Herald* chose not to print.

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

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today in response to the minister's request for where I received my information for my question. The first is the requisite number of copies of *Hansard* from May 7, where the minister for PDD clearly states: “Over 80 per cent of the PDD clients in Alberta have had an assessment already. We will be through most of them before July 1 and the rest of them very shortly thereafter.”

A second tabling is the requisite number of copies of an Alberta Human Services document titled Transforming the PDD Program, where on page 8 the third bullet reads: “As of October 1, 2013 approximately 77% of individuals have been assessed using the Supports Intensity Scale.”

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, Mr. Clerk, allow me to make a brief tabling myself. Hon members, I'm very, very pleased to table with you five copies of a brochure produced by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta entitled Page Biographies, Legislative Assembly of Alberta: 28th Legislature, Fourth Sitting of the First Session, Fall 2013. It will show you that we have seven new pages who are working with us and have joined us for the first time just this past Monday. Of those seven, whom you will meet in due course, three are on duty today. I want to specifically begin by recognizing them. Devyn Godziuk. Where is Devyn? Oh, here you are. Devyn is a St. Albert student in grade 11 at Bellerose high school; Joely Bragg, a Paul Kane school grade 10 student from St. Albert; and Kylie Kwok, a Paul Kane grade 10 student, also from St. Albert.

In addition, we will also meet in the next days to come Laura Bryan, who is a grade 12 student at St. Peter the Apostle high school in St. Albert; Jenna Geldart, who is a grade 12 student at Archbishop MacDonald high school in Edmonton-McClung; Tianna Groeneveld, who is a grade 11 student at the Vermilion outreach school in the Vermilion-Lloydminster constituency; and Christina Luo, who is from Edmonton-Whitemud and at Lillian Osborne, where she is in grade 11.

Hon. members, I know it goes without saying, but your indulgence in the patience that sometimes is required to indoctrinate these new members will be greatly appreciated not only by them but also by me.

Thank you and welcome to our new pages. Good luck and Godspeed, as they say.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Campbell, Minister of Aboriginal Relations, pursuant to the Northern Alberta Development Council Act the Northern Alberta Development Council 2012-2103 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Johnson, Minister of Education, responses to questions raised by Mr. McAllister, hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View; Mrs. Forsyth, hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek; Mr. Pedersen, hon. Member for Medicine Hat, on March 19 and 20, 2013, the Department of Education main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horne, Minister of Health, response to Written Question 23, asked for by Dr. Swann on March 11, 2013:

What is the percentage of new graduates from registered nursing programs in Alberta post-secondary institutions who gained employment with Alberta Health Services in each of the fiscal years 2008/2009 to 2011/2012?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, that's two days in a row that we have managed to escape any points of order. Congratulations. Well done. [interjection]

Hon. Member for Airdrie, you almost had me there.

I'm not yet prepared to rule on the point of privilege that was brought forward yesterday. I will do my best to try and have that

ruling ready for you tomorrow. Meanwhile let us proceed with Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 32

Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and move second reading of Bill 32, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act.

It amends two acts, the Traffic Safety Act and the Highways Development and Protection Act. The amendments brought forward in the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act include granting municipalities the authority to set the times when reduced speed limits in playground zones are in effect, granting the minister the authority to designate lane usage on all provincial highways, and administrative and housekeeping amendments to the Traffic Safety Act and the Highways Development and Protection Act to align with the Criminal Code of Canada and to strengthen and clarify Alberta's legislation pertaining to traffic safety in highway administration.

To provide members with some background, the Traffic Safety Act received royal assent on May 19, 1999. It was proclaimed in force in May 2003; however, most sections of the act were drafted years earlier.

As part of an ongoing process to ensure that legislation is up to date and reflects the priorities of government, we continually reviewed legislation and, combined with input from stakeholders and Albertans, formed the basis of the legislation we are discussing today.

Bill 32, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act, strengthens both the Traffic Safety Act and the Highways Development and Protection Act, making our highways safer by managing traffic flow and ensuring our children are safe near schools and playgrounds. The Traffic Safety Act amendments are also connected to two strategic priorities of the government of Alberta, building Alberta and expanding markets.

I'd like now to provide members with more detail about the two major amendments I've just spoken of, including their rationale and their connection to the government's strategic priorities. The first item I'd like to speak about is playground zones. All members can agree that we want our children to be safe at school and in playgrounds. As you know, these areas are busy places, with the real possibility that children could dart out onto roadways or be unaware of traffic. Under the Traffic Safety Act municipalities have the ability to increase or decrease the school zone time periods that are laid out in the use of highway and rules of the road regulation provided that they post the new times. However, the TSA does not grant municipalities the ability to alter the time period for playground zones. The speed limit for playground zones in Alberta is 30 kilometres per hour beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending one hour after sunset every day of the week.

The amendment to the TSA, section 107, would grant municipalities the authority to adjust these playground zone time periods to meet the unique needs of their communities and to better address safety concerns. For example, municipalities could choose to harmonize the time periods for playground zones and school zones, ensuring consistency and clarity for drivers.

This legislation also addresses safety concerns arising from the fact that many children are on grounds adjacent to roads designated as playground zones before 8:30 a.m., when the playground's own speed limit reduction starts. Since municipalities are in the best position to understand the unique needs of those communities, it makes sense to extend their authority to allow them to adjust playground zone time periods.

Municipalities have indicated through their regular interaction with Alberta Transportation and, more recently, at the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties convention that they strongly support being granted the ability to modify playground zone times.

3:10

We've also heard from parents and Albertans that enhancements are required to make these zones safer based on the needs of the community. This legislation would still require municipalities to post the new times the playground zone is in effect, and Albertans would still know these times. If passed, this change would go into effect on August 1, 2014, giving municipalities the necessary time to consider changes to playground zone time periods as part of their traffic safety planning.

These proposed amendments show that our government has faith in the decision-making authority of municipalities and that this legislation will help them to address safety needs in their communities. I encourage members to support this amendment.

I'd also like to speak about the amendment related to designating highway lane usage. Alberta's 31,000 kilometres of provincial highway are more than asphalt, bridges, and interchanges. They are an interconnected network that help Albertans get to and from work or school and move products to and from market. Ensuring that provincial highways operate safely and efficiently is a priority for this government, and we're always looking to do better by continuously improving the management of our highways and by being open to ideas and suggestions from Albertans, municipalities, and stakeholders.

One of the key components of an efficient highway network is dealing with traffic flow. As members know, a variety of vehicles use provincial highways, including passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, buses, and slow-moving vehicles. To accommodate the variety of vehicles and ensure that traffic moves safely and efficiently, we are looking at how we can improve traffic flow.

Under the Traffic Safety Act Alberta municipalities have the authority to designate the use of lanes on municipal roads. This is an important advantage because it allows municipalities to accommodate their unique transportation needs. The Alberta government, however, does not have the same ability for provincial highways. Currently any restriction on a provincial highway applies to all traffic across the whole width of the highway. To improve traffic flow and safety, changes could be proposed that would allow designations on single lanes or that only apply to one type of vehicle. Other jurisdictions, including Ontario, the U.S., and Australia, have designated lane usage to improve the flow of traffic, enhance safety, and reduce driver frustration which comes from slower moving vehicles using the left traffic lane.

This amendment will ensure that the Minister of Transportation has the ability to designate use of lanes on provincial highways. Under this legislation Alberta Transportation could designate traffic lanes or shoulder lanes on provincial highways as priority lanes for buses and high-occupancy vehicles. Traffic lanes could also be designated for truck routes. This could help improve safety on highways such as 63 or 43, where large items are being moved

to the oil sands or other resource-related projects in northern Alberta.

Where there are specific requests for lane designations, these will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Alberta Transportation will work with municipalities to deal with their unique traffic flow projects and maximize the use of existing highway infrastructure. The ability to designate lanes on provincial highways could result in improved traffic flow, decreased collisions, and reduced driver frustration.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans benefit from a safe and efficient transportation system that enables market access, supports a strong economy, and serves a growing population. This amendment helps to ensure our provincial highways are functioning at their best so Albertans can count on them when they need them.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act will make administrative and housekeeping amendments to sections 1 through 4 and to section 8 of the Traffic Safety Act and to sections 1, 38, and 51 of the Highways Development and Protection Act.

I'd like to speak about the administrative and housekeeping amendments to the Traffic Safety Act. In 2008 new offences were added to Canada's Criminal Code, including causing bodily harm or death while operating a motor vehicle with a blood-alcohol content higher than .08 and causing bodily harm or death to another person while operating a motor vehicle while having refused to provide a breath or blood sample.

It's important to note that Alberta had already enhanced its impaired driving laws in 2012, when the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2011, came into force. This law enhanced Alberta's impaired driving sanctions by substituting a set of escalating penalties for the previous 24-hour suspension, lengthening other periods of suspension and seizure, and mandating education and monitoring. By amending the TSA to align with the Criminal Code, Alberta is ensuring its traffic safety legislation is strong, clear, and free of technical loopholes.

Amendments to the Highways Development and Protection Act will clarify wording pertaining to the closure of provincial highways, with a road plan and liability concerning the obstruction of or damage to a highway. These amendments will help to strengthen and clarify the legislation that keeps our provincial highway network operating safely and efficiently.

I'd like to conclude my remarks by saying that the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act is more than just changes to legislation. It will have a real impact on the everyday lives of Albertans. It will make school and playground zones clearer for drivers and safer for children, and it will maximize the efficiency of our vast provincial highway network so that people and goods can move smoothly throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere hope that all members will join me in supporting this important piece of legislation. At this time I would now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 27

Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act

[Adjourned debate October 29: Mr. Griffiths]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, you're the only one I see at the moment, so carry on.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to get this opportunity to speak in second reading to the proposed Bill 27, Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act. Now, clearly,

this bill has a bit of history behind it because many of the things that are in this act were in fact put into place by the government during the floods in southern Alberta this spring and summer. This is a little bit after the fact, but at least they've brought it before the House, which I always appreciate.

But I am uneasy about the amount of additional power, the extended scope of the power that the government is granting to itself. I don't believe it's an exaggeration to make this analogy, but it is, to me, akin to giving itself the War Measures Act to deal with something that really doesn't require that. I mean, this is a very wide scope of power that the government is taking. There is no appeal that is allowed for any of the decisions that are made, no sassing back from those municipalities, not to this government. The language that's used is very aggressive, maybe, or almost hostile.

I have a couple of observations and then a few questions. I'm wondering what the criteria is that the government is using when it sets out things like section 615. I don't want to be too specific here, but when we look at, you know, if there's a disaster or an emergency in a particular municipal authority, then the minister can go ahead and modify provisions of the Municipal Government Act, which covers every municipality in the province. It's the law; it's God. It's what they all are created under. All they need is a disaster, and they can change one or more of the provisions in the Municipal Government Act as it applies to that authority. They can exempt the authority from other requirements or provide them with specific authority in addition to what they already have.

Now, I know that there's some history behind those particular clauses, and maybe I can get the minister or one of his designates to explain that a little more carefully. I do want to know what the criteria are for making those decisions. What is taken into account by the minister in order to implement those powers? There's absolutely nothing in this bill, which is – wait for it – four pages long. But, seriously, with the weight of the powers that are being granted in this bill, it's about four tonnes. I'd like to know what the criteria are. What is their checklist that they are going to use for deciding this allocation of powers and changing of regs under the act?

I look at page 3, that whole definition of floodways. I think what this is is the discussion that municipalities should not be allowed to build things in flood plains – that is the language that I've heard; this is using "floodway" – that the provincial government has got to clamp down and stop municipalities from doing that. Okay. I've certainly read that kind of commentary in the media around what happened this summer.

3:20

It does indicate under the relevant section in the bill that the Lieutenant Governor in Council "may" make these regulations. In other sections it's "must" make the regulations. This is "may." But I do note, everybody, that this is cabinet. This is not the Legislature. Nobody has to come back and talk to anyone. There's no consultation required under this. Cabinet can just go ahead and start doing this.

This would be regulations

controlling, regulating or prohibiting any use or development of land that is located in a floodway within a municipal authority, including,

And I love this.

without limitation,

Yowza. That's a lot of power: without limitation.

regulations specifying the types of developments that are authorized in a floodway.

Wow. Without limitation. Just imagine. You know, that's like an all-you-can-eat buffet forever, without limitations.

It goes on. You can exempt a municipal authority from the application of the act or anything. You can modify or suspend it. You can define the meaning of floodway. Given that so much rides on this whole concept of floodway, how can you pass an act that depends so much on the meaning of floodway, which you don't have in the act? I guess they're going to develop it later under a regulation. So we're being asked in this House to pass a bill that depends a lot on the definition of floodway, but we don't have a definition of floodway. They're going to make it up later.

Are you sensing the gap in logic here? There's a bit of a jump. Somebody had a little bit of a stumble and jumped onto the next page maybe? I would say that that's a fairly gaping hole. I was quite interested in the principle of this bill. I'm still open to supporting it. But, honestly, you want me to pass something in which you guys are going to figure out the definition of it later? You're giving yourself a whole bunch of powers without limitation to do stuff, to change sections of the Municipal Government Act, and you'll decide what that means and the definition of it later. You know, I don't think I trust this government enough to just give you that blank cheque. No.

I would like to know how you're going to facilitate this process of defining the floodway definition after we've already passed the act. How does that affect communities that already have existing and thriving residences or venues in what I guess could be defined as a floodway? How do you know? How do you have any certainty about whether you should build a garage, whether you should expand your store? You have no idea. When you look in the Municipal Government Act, you go: "Okay. I may or may not be in a floodway. I don't know what the definition of that is because the government is going to make it up later. I would like to do some improvements, but I don't know if can do that because I don't know what the criteria of it are and if I'm actually defined as being in a floodway."

You guys make it really hard to support you sometimes, like, unnecessarily difficult. You went through this whole thing this summer. You did a fairly good job. Lots of people have said that. But, honestly, you really make it hard to support this when I look at a bill that gives you power without limitations, the ability to change the Municipal Government Act – modifying provisions, exempting, adding in without limitation – and no definition of who this applies to. You've got a bit of 'splainin' to do, if I can put it that way. I want that definition, definitely. I really want to underline the kind of uncertainty that you're creating here.

You've done this before, just to remind you. I am not a pompom-waving fan of property rights – I'm not; that's no surprise – but this is very akin to the bill that the government passed which would allow them to indicate to a landowner that they were going to expropriate or use their land at some point in the future and that therefore they were allowed to make no modifications to the buildings or to the land site. Somebody in the Wildrose is going to tell me the number of the bill that was. [interjections] It's bills 19, 24, 36. Okay. It's a whole group of them.

That's exactly what you did then. You essentially created huge uncertainty for people by saying: "You're in a right-of-way. We're likely going to build – whatever – a highway, transmission towers, a high-speed rail link between Edmonton and Calgary or something." You gave yourself the power to indicate to people: "We're going to take that land eventually. We don't know when that is, but you can't change anything because we don't want to pay you for any improvements you make to your land."

If my rural colleague from Strathmore-Brooks wanted to – I'm trying to remember what kind of farming he does. Dairy?

Mr. Hale: Cow-calf.

Ms Blakeman: Sorry. Cow-calf. Oh, that's right.

If he wants to build another barn or, you know, put up a pivot, great. He was in a total morass of undefined territory because he didn't know that he was probably not going to be allowed to do it, and not only for his generation but for his two sons. We have no idea when the government was actually going to do something with this man's land. So you see how much uncertainty it creates for people in the future to say: "Well, at some point we're going to do something with this, so hang on. You can't do any improvements to it."

When I say to you that there are already a number of municipalities that have communities that I would think would fall under – it would make sense to me that it would fall under it – a definition of floodway except that you didn't define it, you create uncertainty for them because they can't tell what's going to happen by way of future development.

There's also very little timing of the integration of this except – oh, I've read too many bills lately. I'm sorry; I might be making a mistake. I'm pretty sure this bill did not have any timing for when these regs would be put in. You know, that's a bit of a problem, too, Mr. Speaker. The government sort of failed to take into consideration a number of reports that were created for them both by members of the Assembly but also by private agencies that were hired to give them advice on flood mitigation and they didn't take it. Given the timing, I'd like a bit more certainty from the government on that.

So we've got wide powers, in some cases with no limitations. It's binding. We have cabinet making these decisions – sorry for the cliché – behind closed doors. We have uncertainty around definitions. We have no criteria. We have no appeal. Gee whiz, this is looking a lot like a centralization of provincial power over local power. Now, I can be wrong. Not often, but I can be. I'm pretty sure this government has a whole bunch of press releases about how they want to restore more local decision-making power and that they prefer that local decisions are made. I'm sure I've heard the Premier up here talking vigorously about how local bodies should be making those decisions. But how, when this is clearly centralizing power in the hands of the government?

I think this bill was designed for a good reason, and I think it was designed based on experiences that they had over the summer in trying to deal with the disasters and how they were stymied in some cases from doing good, effective, timely work because of the way the act was written. Fair enough, you know. Then you should have a piece of legislation in front of this Assembly.

3:30

But I really want to hear from you why you need such an expansion of your scope of powers, why you're not giving us any criteria, and why you're not giving us any appeal mechanism. What do they have to do? Take you to court? Well, come on, you guys. I mean, this is becoming a bit of a habit with you, where you force smaller bodies, smaller local authorities, to take you to court. And you know what? The courts increasingly are siding with the other people, not with you. That's another bill we'll talk about soon, I'm sure.

Thank you for the opportunity to put some of those questions out and to give some initial feedback. I would really like to support this bill, but I need some very clear information about the choices the government has made in this bill, and I would like

some backup documentation that's going to show me how you're not going to abuse the power – immense power – that you've given yourself. You know, there has to be a balance there. The constitution recognizes that balance. They give a great deal of power, and then they put limitations on it. I'm not seeing this bill put limitations on the powers that this provincial government is giving itself. So that's what I want to hear from you.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills caught my attention and then Edmonton-Calder, but since we didn't have the Official Opposition reply first – we're straight into the Member for Edmonton-Centre – 29(2)(a) is not available yet, until the third speaker. Some people had sent a question up in that regard, so I'm just clarifying it. Thank you.

Let's go on to Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 27, Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act, is mostly about flood recovery, mitigation, and reconstruction, but it also contains a power grab by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the cabinet, which may or may not be warranted. Many of the powers granted are reasonable in principle, such as determining what mitigation measures should be done and how they will be reimbursed, filing caveats on floodway properties that have received DRP and conditional caveats on flood fringe, determining what is in a floodway and what development can be allowed, and exempting certain municipalities from floodway regulations.

Given, however, that they are basing it on faulty maps or not taking future mitigation into account, communities and individuals might be treated very unfairly if regulations are adopted before sorting these things out.

Section 2 of the bill is particularly troubling. It proposes giving this sweeping power to the minister to trump the MGA entirely if there appears to be an emergency: (a) municipalities can have parts of the MGA modified, (b) communities can be exempted from parts of the MGA, and (c) communities can be given powers beyond the MGA. After looking at this, I find it very hard to come to the conclusion that these types of powers are necessary. I'll need some explanation on those before I can put my full support behind this bill.

Also, there is a proposal to extend provincial control of local state of emergency from 14 to 28 days. Twenty-eight days would still not have made much of a difference in High River. Probably, closer to 49 or 50 days would have been much better. Just a suggestion: why not let the local authority decide if it wants to extend the period every seven days or every 14 days on a continuing basis until the municipality felt that the emergency was over?

Bill 27 adds powers to the cabinet and the minister with respect to defining those floodways, controlling regulation and prohibiting development in floodways, exempting municipalities from the definition, and forcing municipalities to amend those bylaws with no compensation for costs in that whole process. Bill 27 also lengthens the state of that emergency period and provides that framework for a funding reimbursement, so that may be looked after.

I can support this bill, but I'm going to demand explanations for section 2 and will be proposing an amendment to that 14- to 28-day period. Emergency powers are needed by municipalities and the minister to handle a disaster effectively. It also gives a chance for more clarity on the funding and the reimbursement for mitigation measures.

Floodway development has been going on for far too long. We know the 2005 flood brought out a report that was mostly dealing with flood maps and so on. That sat on a shelf for the last eight years. Caveats can assure that taxpayers won't be unnecessarily on the hook again for rebuilding in floodways. The floodway situations can vary by a sizable amount across the province in different areas, so one size shouldn't fit all. These powers are being given to a government using old maps and not taking those future mitigations into account.

As I mentioned, 28 days is not long enough in a case like High River, so we need to let municipalities be a part of this process. As I said, extending that every 14 days might be a better approach.

Allowing the cabinet to designate what is and isn't a floodway and to which town's floodway the rules apply allows this PC government potentially to benefit PC government friends and family by allowing developments on lands that should be floodways or to punish others. The minister has unrestricted powers in a perceived emergency to entirely suspend or even create powers beyond the Municipal Government Act for a municipality, intrusion and work creation without compensation in municipal planning departments. Properties with caveats will be devalued, and the process must be managed fairly.

In closing, I just want to say that I really want to support this bill. I think it's a valuable tool for municipalities to use in the future. But we've got to be careful with this. It has to be done right. If we can have these issues addressed, I can give my full support to this bill.

Thank you very much.

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

Seeing no one, let us move on, then, to Edmonton-Calder, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly interested in making a few introductory comments in regard to Bill 27, Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act. This is, I think, a very important piece of legislation. Its time has come to be addressed here in the Legislature. It's unfortunate that we had to have such a major disaster to help focus our energy to work on floodway measures – for example, not building in floodways – and to have adequate emergency and restitution provisions built into legislation in the event of this sort of disaster.

Certainly, we've heard already lots of speeches and information as to the scale and the unprecedented scope of the floods in June, and I certainly had a personal experience by travelling both to Calgary a few short days after the flood and to High River later in the summer. Working from High River backwards, I was absolutely shocked to see the scale and the scope of the damage in the town of High River. The whole downtown was severely damaged and will be difficult to, I think, rehabilitate to its former state. I think a majority of all the buildings in the town of High River suffered some or extensive damage as well. So I think it's first and foremost a tribute to the people of High River, that had the resilience and the sense of community to bind together and to work to rebuild their community.

I had a tour with one of the town councillors, and he gave me lots of time and valuable information about just how well the community was responding. Alberta first responders, including the police, construction and town workers, the military: it was just all manner of remarkable integration of so many resources. I was overwhelmed to see just how effective it really was in those first few days.

3:40

In Calgary, again, the same sort of thing: it was almost like it was hard to recognize it as the same city in those immediate areas where people just mobilized and put aside all other things to help neighbourhoods such as Elbow Park and Rideau – those are the areas I was at – Sunnyside as well, downtown close to Chinatown. It was quite remarkable. We had a team of very ambitious volunteers working with me to help muck out basements and to just do whatever work was necessary.

It's a time for us all, I think, to reflect on the value of the things that we own together and the true value of community when we do suffer this kind of material damage. The material items that we have sometimes are really not worth much of anything once they get wet. Lord knows, I re-evaluated my own basement and realized just how much junk we really do accumulate here in our society with stuff, and once it gets wet it's not worth anything at all. The true value, we learned, clearly was in the value of people and community and family that pulled together and still are doing so today.

So we know and I think all Albertans affected by the flood know that we will try hard to ensure that we both seek restitution for people who have suffered flood damage and try to improve the situation so we can mitigate this sort of thing happening again. I guess all of us probably have that intention in our hearts here in this Legislature. How we decide to do that in the best, most effective way possible, I think, is our responsibility here now, to have an open debate on this, including entertaining the possibility of amendments to the Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act. I think there are lots of good areas in this bill, but I think there are other things that we could improve on, certainly.

My understanding from reading this over the last day or so is that municipalities will no longer be allowed to approve new developments in floodways, which is a good thing. Additional funding will be available to homeowners for flood mitigation measures, which, again, is very helpful. Provincial states of emergency will be extended, and notices will be placed on land titles of properties in flood areas. Property owners in the so-called flood fringe areas will be having to have a notice removed from their land title by putting minimum flood mitigation measures into place. Properties in a floodway will then have a permanent notice placed on their properties. These are quite wide-ranging amendments and provisions, but built within them, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, are some problems that I would like to suggest we could sort out through some amendments to this particular bill.

As the previous speaker pointed out, you know, we all want to support something like this, but we have to ensure that we're doing it right and we're not adding new, onerous powers or too much power to this Legislature when, of course, we have another very important on-the-ground level of government, which are the municipalities and municipal districts, which do know their areas and have intelligent contributions to make in the event of a disaster such as this.

As well, just before I talk about the bill more specifically here, we can expect that this sort of thing can happen again. It's important for us to not use this once-in-a-lifetime language, because these sorts of extreme weather events are happening more often, not just here in Alberta but around North America and across the world as well, due to climate change. We know that it just creates more variations in how we expect the weather to behave, so we do need to expect that this sort of flooding can and might and will in fact happen again sooner rather than later.

For example, I was just speaking with some other hon. members yesterday from southern Alberta, a very interesting conversation,

talking about that very large storm which sort of hung over Canmore and into the Banff area. If it happened to swing another 130 kilometres more towards the Bow summit area and that whole catchment area around Lake Louise, we would have had that much more rain all captured into that drainage area and funnelled down – there's only one way for the water to go – in through the Bow valley. For example, the city of Canmore would have been affected exponentially more than it had and downstream as well. So we were fortunate. It's hard to imagine, considering the scope of the damage. I'm just bringing up this point to illustrate how unstable these whole situations can be and how things can go from bad to worse.

I think one of the biggest problems that I have in regard to the floodways is that this legislation seems to be – and correct me if I'm wrong – relying still on the same outdated flood maps, which really did not help prevent the catastrophic losses in June 2013. We still don't have any concrete information on how they will update these problematic flood maps. We've had the mayor of Calgary and other municipalities complaining about how they were not particularly consulted on these flood maps either.

Again, going backwards to forwards here is useful because we don't want to repeat the same mistakes twice. But we did have fairly comprehensive reports that would suggest that we should have restricted floodway building many years ago and thus could have saved millions of dollars on this flood of June 2013 if we had not continued to build on floodways. I know that this is a difficult decision to make, but the reason that this Legislature was built in the first place was to make these kinds of difficult decisions and to recognize that we are responsible if we sign off, let's say, Crown land to an area that's prone to flooding and then, in fact, that whole area or part of it gets damaged. Then, you know, we've not done due diligence here at this level to protect property and to protect human life and assets as such.

A number of experts, Mr. Speaker, and studies show that the damage that was sustained in 2013 could have been greatly reduced if we did in fact implement the recommendations from several earlier reports and kept more and better updated maps. There have been engineering reports done as far back as 1973 by a Montreal engineering company, in 1983 by Alberta Environment, and then in 2006, which we all know about, with Mr. Groeneveld's report that have been used by experts since to argue that a flood of this magnitude was very predictable and not really that rare.

We can look back to earlier history of what was the town of Calgary from the 1880s and then the turn of the last century, when similar floods had taken place. In fact, the big growth period of the city of Calgary seemed to be an interlude in what otherwise were quite regular substantial floods from the Bow and Elbow rivers into the Calgary area. Also, there was a 2010 flood report that Calgary would suffer more frequent and severe floods. That was quite a substantial report by Golder Associates and consultants to provide emergency response and flood mapping.

So it's not as though we didn't know. I mean, I guess that is becoming obvious in this session. You know, we're not just relying on the past, but that's the only way by which we can learn to mitigate problems in the future, isn't it?

We heard from John Pomeroy, the Canadian research chair in water resources and climate change and professor at the University of Saskatchewan. He also said that the integrated weather and water prediction models needed to give better warning but also to assist in planning for future flood plains, safer reservoir management, and better forest and agricultural management for long-term flood and drought mitigation.

Mr. Speaker, we can look at the watershed not just from the immediate area around a place like High River or Medicine Hat or

Drumheller or Calgary but right from the top of the watershed, from the mountains, right? The importance of protecting watersheds and forested areas right up to the Continental Divide is just as important as the berms and byways that we can perhaps provide to pass water around our cities.

3:50

For example, the Castle region, which we have been debating for a number of years, is an obvious place where rivers are starting – right? – on the Continental Divide. The ability and the capacity of the forest and the watershed in the mountain and foothill regions act as a delay and a mitigating factor to flooding of downstream areas from the Castle region. That's just one example, but it's a very good one. We have the South Saskatchewan planning thing before us now, which we could use to protect the Castle in a comprehensive way, not just the rocks and the ice at the very tops of the mountains, and mitigate future flood damage by creating a wildland provincial park in the Castle, for example.

I see this bill as being quite sweeping, and it certainly has some capacity to do some good. The amendment to the Emergency Management Act: I think I need more clarification on that. I know that we put more power into hands when emergencies are declared, but I think that we need to define that more clearly in this bill. This bill is going to be looked at by a lot of people, literally millions of people who were affected by the floods in the spring, and we need to ensure that people can feel confident moving forward.

Another area that I would seek clarification on, which I will in the due course of time, is around these provisions that are going to go onto land titles. I'm just not sure how people can be compensated for that. Of course, when you're looking for someone to purchase a piece of property that might be in a flood fringe zone or in an actual flood area and there's some sort of caveat or written letter on that land title, I'm really not sure whether or not lending agencies like banks or credit unions would actually give someone a mortgage to buy a property like that, that has such an onerous provision on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is now available.

Seeing no one, let us move on, then, to Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's a pleasure to comment on the issues of the day, and I see that opportunity before me in discussing Bill 27, Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act. There is no doubt that what has transpired over the course of the last six months has exposed some weaknesses that we have had not only in legislation in dealing with our proposed flood mitigation strategy but also in the tools that we had in our toolbox to deal with the appropriate measures of rebuilding communities. It looks like the minister is going to attempt to do something on that front. I applaud the minister for taking this action.

I do have concerns that they do appear to be rather broad and sweeping and vast in their scope, the powers that he is seeking, and there are very few parameters in which they will be used or by which they can be limited in their use. For instance, just to point it out – and I will come back to it – the entire act, which is four pages long, appears to introduce a new terminology into the way we understand flooding. We appear to base everything in this act on the definition of a floodway. Right now, by my reading of the act, there is no working definition of floodway. If you look at what we have done, our provincial mapping systems and civic

mapping systems are based so far on a terminology, that I can see, of flood fringe and floodway.

When I see the introduction of a brand new term that the minister is going to be relying on – and he's going to derive a great deal of power from this term, and there's no working definition of that term – which is “floodway,” in the legislation, it causes me a great deal of concern that we do not have that definition here. It makes it very difficult to evaluate the scope and the breadth and the depth of what the minister is seeking. How much land will this impact? How many communities will this impact? What is the impact on local decision-makers and their ability to respond to the needs of their citizens? I believe that was covered pretty extensively by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, but I'll come back to discuss that as well.

If we look at what transpired in southern Alberta with the flood, there is no doubt that it was an event of epic proportions. The minister is correct when he points out that this was probably the largest disaster that has struck not only this province but this country in a great many years. You see that not only by the destruction of lives but personal property. The ongoing efforts to try to, I guess, not only assuage people's concerns today but assuage them going forward are evident in that bill. I think that on that front this government needs to work on how it's going to mitigate damages in the future.

I will applaud them on some of those discussions that are going on. There was a conference down in Calgary that suggested to me that the government is taking upscale mitigation seriously. There are proposals before the government. They've said that they are going to explore all options on how to mitigate damage. That means reducing to the greatest extent possible the amount of damage that is going to occur to our cities in southern Alberta and, hopefully, to other jurisdictions in this province as a result of a flood or a disaster situation.

Not to bring up old wounds, but why not? We often do it in the Legislature. Why not do that now? We didn't do as good a job as we could have in mitigating damages, and that was fairly evident when some of the revelations came about that we did not implement what has become known as the 2006 Groeneveld report and that we continued to build on flood zones, I think they were called at that point in time, when there was a clear recommendation for communities and a clear direction for the minister to act in this regard. It appears that that action is going to be taken now, but there is some question as to whether we didn't implement that to its greatest extent. I don't believe we did act on it to its greatest extent, and that's what it behooves us to do.

I'm encouraged that the government will look at all plans available to mitigate damage. There are some suggestions out there that with an investment of – it might sound like a lot – close to a billion dollars much of this damage can be averted in the future from Calgary and outlying areas. If that can be done with that price tag, although steep, I would seriously urge the government to implement such a policy.

4:00

If you look at the damage this has caused not only to families and communities but to the public purse as a result, the costs are astronomical. Some estimates are about \$6 billion. If we look at investing that money under the guise that it's going to prevent this future damage, the money spent is going to be well suited in the future. I'm glad to hear that that is going on, and I would suggest that the government needs to look at all options to protect families and communities in that regard.

You know, if we look at the historical rain patterns or flooding events that occurred here in Alberta, it should have been predicted

as a certainty that this flood was going to attend. If you look at rainfall patterns that occurred in the 1929 flood, with a flood of that magnitude the entire downtown Calgary would have suffered significantly more damage than what has transpired. So in some instances, looking at historical flood information that was available, we can consider ourselves lucky, if you can believe that, Mr. Speaker, with what transpired this time.

With that information, I think we've also got to recognize that despite whatever flood mitigation the government decides to go with – like I said, I would encourage them to go bold in this regard – I'm of the belief that future flooding is going to occur, whether it be Calgary, southern Alberta, or other outlying jurisdictions. In my view, we need to protect against that eventuality, and it's not going to be able to all be solved in mitigation strategies.

What has to be done to protect both families and communities as well as the public purse is to develop a comprehensive disaster/flood insurance program. If you look at other jurisdictions around the world, primarily Europe following the 2003 floods, which devastated families and communities as well as the public purse, they implemented such a strategy. What this does is that it allows for mandatory coverage to allow people to rebuild their lives, but it also protects the government purse from the eventual run that will happen there. People pay a risk-adjusted premium according to the area they live in and contribute to the eventuality of the need for insurance.

Now, of course, you're going to get some people saying that they will never need that insurance, but I think never is a long time. Look, no one saw Slave Lake burning to the ground years ago. No one could foresee Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicking over the lantern in Chicago years ago to burn that city down or some eventual disaster that could happen in Fort McMurray. Should it be necessary to rebuild that city, hopefully we will have the wherewithal to be able to afford such an endeavour, and flood insurance is the way to do it.

I will look at this bill more closely as, like I said, it gives the minister a wide swath of power. We need to understand what a floodway is and how much power and what scope this new definition being introduced into the lexicon is going to bring. That does concern me, and it does concern our future ability to, I guess, limit the decision-making power of government, should we wish to, in this avenue. Once this power is given with no real definition of floodway in place, in my view, it could serve as a recipe for failure.

In any event, those are my initial comments, Mr. Speaker. I will look at the bill even more closely than I have. I think it has potential to do a lot of good and potential to smooth out the way our provincial government deals with disasters in the future and allow for us to develop the tools and capacity to effectively deal with situations like these, that are going to occur again.

On that note, I'll leave that as food for thought for the minister and future thought on how to mitigate damages, both on the upstream side of things as well as on flood insurance, and hopefully we'll hear some comments in this regard going forward in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available for anyone who wishes. Cardston-Taber-Warner under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our study of human nature throughout history, of course, teaches us that there's a fine line between granting power and ensuring acceptable use of it. In a real emergency our first concern, naturally, is for the safety of people, then their pets, property, and public infrastructure. Heroic

efforts are required, and heroes always seem to be found who will rise to the occasion, setting their own self-interest aside and serving the real, immediate needs of neighbours and friends and sometimes perfect strangers. Some are volunteers. Some are public employees as first responders. Naturally, we're grateful to all of them. But sometimes absolute power may convey a sense of self-righteous overzealousness. How would you, hon. member, recommend that this act could avoid that?

Mr. Hehr: Well, I'm not the critic for this area. Nevertheless, I think we do need a working definition of floodway. That, to me, seems to be a starting position. To be fair, I don't have a working definition of floodway. I do also understand, though, that the government had to act before legislation was in place to implement a full response to this flood. Much of the stuff that they did during this flood was not found in our enabling legislation, and this goes some way to rectifying that, and at least we're having that discussion now.

If you look at ways to eliminate that power, you've got to look at what a floodway is. You have to develop comprehensive maps as to what a floodway is and where it is and where it will apply, both in southern Alberta and northern Alberta and the like. I don't sense this as being ready to make that call; hence, the minister wants to leave that for a date to be named later. The trouble is whether we get to that date. That is the trouble. Does this all go to regulation and that's the last we see of it?

You just read 693.1(1):

- (a) controlling, regulating or prohibiting any use or development of land that is located in a floodway within a municipal authority, including, without limitation, regulations specifying the types of developments that are authorized in a floodway.

The term "without limitation" tends to give me a great deal of concern, and that is primarily because I don't have a working definition of floodway. I don't have a lot of the background tools, and I don't know if they've been developed yet. Whether we can get to that working definition – I hope we can, and maybe the minister is going to insert one or flesh that out for us. That would be a beginning point.

I'm sure our critic in this area will have many more amendments to follow to try and limit some of the concerns that you've brought up in your question to me as well as what other speakers have brought up both before and, I'm sure, after.

4:10

The Speaker: Anyone else under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing no one, let us move on to Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I rise to discuss Bill 27, Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act, but before I go there, I just want to talk about some of the positives of what I think this act is actually trying to achieve. We all know that the floods were extremely devastating in the southern part of our province. We know Calgary and High River, and we know the many stories that came from there but also from Medicine Hat, Bragg Creek, Cochrane, and even from my own riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. If I'm missing any of them, I apologize.

We know that a lot of front-line people, volunteers, community workers, people who owned homes, people who didn't own homes, and everybody available in Alberta put their hearts and minds behind everybody affected by the flood and set out to do a lot of hard work. I know that a lot of people came out to Calgary, High River, and all the surrounding areas to help people clean out their homes, remove their belongings, remove all the debris, the

mud and the muck and everything else that came along with it, to ensure that everybody could try and get back to some sort of sense of normal as soon as possible.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

I remember the day that our team went there as well. We walked into homes that had water all the way up to the floor joists and further, and everything in their basements was ruined, and many, many people were so saddened by the loss of all their memories. It was a difficult time for me to go there as someone who wasn't necessarily personally affected by the flood. To watch so many people in such devastation, when we were driving down the roads, it almost seemed like the world had stopped. Everything had just stopped for a moment in time. The roads were clear, the cars were buried, and the debris was everywhere. We know that so many communities were actually fully blocked off.

I appreciate all of the hard work that everybody put in to make sure that we got back to normal as soon as possible, and some are still doing that, especially in communities like High River. We certainly saw, you know, the Alberta spirit come out in all of the efforts that they made with the Calgary Stampede. Who honestly would have thought at the time the Calgary Stampede was affected that we really could still put on the greatest show on Earth in such a little period of time? I have to admit that when we went to one evening of the Stampede, I stood in awe as I watched life go on there for a moment and everybody being able to take just one day and celebrate exactly the Alberta spirit.

I do have some concerns with this bill, but before I go there, I want to acknowledge all of the hard work that has been done on the bill.

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

Mrs. Towle: We always acknowledge all of the hard work that's done on many of these bills. Keep in mind that the Wildrose supported 70 per cent of your bills in the last session. But it is our job to offer any opportunity for amendment to make any bill better, just the same as it's every MLA's job in this House to offer any amendment to make any bill better.

Bill 27 is mostly about flood recovery and the flood mitigation system and how that is developed, how that's appropriated, and how we define and deal with what flood mitigation is, what a floodway is, what the reconstruction plan is. My concern with it – I'll go into that a little bit later – is around the powers that the bill gives. It is very important that every municipality has the ability in an emergency to be able to do exactly what they need to do to make sure people are kept safe, and there's no question that in events where the municipality is overwhelmed or not able to do that, the provincial powers need to be able to step in and need to be able to do their part.

We also know that on many, many occasions there are not enough resources within the municipality to maybe do the right things, make the right decisions, or enough expertise to be able to do that, so for that reason, they may call on the provincial resources to ensure that they're able to keep their residents safe. Of course, that's very, very important.

There are a few things here that are very positive. I mean, one of things that they talk about is that Bill 27 lengthens the state of emergency period, and certainly there seems to be a lot of arguments for why that might be needed, and that is not necessarily a negative. There's a lot of conversation about flood zones and floodways and how we put caveats on titles and how we make sure that people are properly compensated for exactly what they need to do.

So with all of that in mind and all of the hard work that has gone into this bill, I think there's an opportunity for us to help it be a better bill that serves all Albertans. One of the things that I think we could start with is – obviously, we have the Groeneveld report from 2006. What's interesting about the Groeneveld report from 2006 is that it actually mirrors very closely a report from 2002. So it seems to me that the first question I have is: in creating this Bill 27, what was the consultation process between the report from 2002 going into the report of 2007 from Mr. Groeneveld? Who at that time was the MLA for High River and had experienced substantial flooding in the past? And 2013 was certainly unprecedented flooding.

In Mr. Groeneveld's report he makes several recommendations, but many of them are very similar to what is being recommended in here. However, this bill, unfortunately, doesn't go far enough. Mr. Groeneveld's report is several pages long, yet this bill is really only three pages long. It seems to me that we can do a little bit better on defining what we need to have done and how far it needs to go.

One of the things that Mr. Groeneveld's report identified right away was that you need to co-ordinate the completion of the flood maps. The maps need to be accurate, and they need to be updated. Now, we've heard time and time again a lot of criticism over the current flood maps. Many people say that some of them are from 1993. Some of them are from 1995. Some of them are newer, and that's fantastic. The question is: what is the process for updating those flood maps when it's needed?

One of the things that I know even in my own riding we experienced is that on the west side of my riding we have the Red Deer River, and over the last 10 years the Red Deer River has changed the way it flows dramatically and in a lot of cases has eroded a lot of the banks and actually has shifted quite a bit further to either the north or the west from where it was originally on the flood map. I sat with the Red Deer county EMO, and she walked me through the changes. Then I went and spent two days, actually, with councillors, and they drove me through so I could actually see exactly what had happened to where we are now.

They actually have overlays for every year from aerials. They started with 1995, I believe. I could be wrong on the date, and I apologize if I am, but it was in the 1993-95 zone. They started with that flood map, and in that flood map, yes, everything looks relatively proper. It looks like the river flows in a fairly decent, logical way. Then every year after that they have an overlay of normal erosion.

But what happened in 2005 in my riding was pretty significant. We had a massive flood. After 2005 and through that flood the flood maps actually changed dramatically. They actually changed course, and they moved several hundred feet from where the original stream of the river used to go to where it appears to be today. It's interesting because when we went on the drive out there, you could see where the river used to flow through, which is now all full of rock and silt and debris. Now the river has changed course and actually has come and eroded the banks and in many, many places is actually eroding the banks to the point that the county is very, very concerned about significant road damage and whether or not the actual roads will be able to hold the load of what is travelling on them.

That same area is designated just DRP. It's not a floodway. It's not a flood zone. It's not anything, yet every single year since 2005 the residences in that area flood. Now, no one expects everybody to be able to update everything every single year, but a lot of our municipalities are doing good work. They're investing in their communities, and they're investing in their residents. They're watching this, and they have the expertise to offer to the

government to say: "We've done a lot of this historical data. We have it all in place, and we can tell you exactly which communities and which person is consistently going to DRP funding because they get significantly flooded every single year."

4:20

When we look at the overlays from 2005 onwards to 2010, the significant damage that was done to county roads, to Crown land, and to personal residences has got to be costing us just a horrendous amount of money. Now, in 2013 the flood that affected several residents in my riding actually took out many of the roads they identified within the last five to eight years that structurally could be considered at risk. At least eight different county roads in my area were either completely wiped out or so significantly damaged that they could not actually be driven on.

The other part of that is that the roads that were wiped out or significantly damaged – it was almost like you could see year after year after year and could pinpoint exactly which road that would be and, in turn, which residents would be affected, which residents might get completely flooded, and which person may or may not lose their home.

Had we had accurate maps, in my area anyway – and I know this is what we're hearing across the province – many of these people might be redesignated for whatever type of funding that is coming from the relief funding that we have right now. What we have right now are people who possibly should be in a floodway or a flood zone but aren't and those who possibly were but because the river shifted so dramatically shouldn't be in a floodway or flood zone and are no longer dedicated for flood rebuilding, DRP funding, however you want to do it.

The importance of having accurate maps cannot be stated enough. There is no question that if we start at a point of inaccuracy, everything we do as we go forward will cause more and more problems. I'll give you a prime example. We have a stretch of area around a county road where those people, when they bought the property, were not designated in a floodway, not designated in a flood zone, never ever flooded in their lives. When they went to build a shop on their property, they did everything right. They went and sat with the county because they wanted to be aware of the river, which was fairly close to them, and the county identified to them: "You know, you could be at risk of flooding. I know you don't know that, but you could be at risk of flooding just because of the way the river now flows."

The county worked with them to create flood mitigation issues so that they didn't get flooded. That was a fantastic opportunity for the county to do that and offer that expertise to the landowner. However, not everybody does that. Many people will be buying property or selling property in areas where they have no idea – no idea – if they're in a floodway or a flood zone or in a DRP area. That needs to be fixed before we can really go forward.

We have to talk about accuracy. We have to talk about doing it right the first time and then making sure that we take that information and then take the value of the reports and the significant work that has been done in 2002 and 2005 and by the experts who saw the flooding in 2013 and make sure everybody is at the table to offer their advice.

The other part of that is that when we take a look at the section in the Emergency Management Act, under (2) it says "Section 6 is amended by adding the following after clause (c)," and (c.2) says:

Respecting the filing and removal of caveats against titles to land in a flood fringe or floodway, as those terms are defined in the regulations, for which funding has been provided pursuant to a disaster recovery program administered under the regulations.

As a real estate broker and as a landowner and a homeowner I would have great concern with this part of it. The reason I have concern is that if I'm wrongly designated in a floodway or a flood zone, am I going to be able to sell my property? If I'm not wrongly designated in a floodway or flood zone and I get flooded, will I be sued by anybody who buys the property after me, especially if my municipality can identify specifically that this actually should have been in a flood zone or floodway or designated differently and has evidence of that? Could the new homeowner come back and sue me personally because I didn't declare? Even further, I wonder if we're putting real estate agents all over the place at risk.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

We now have 29(2)(a) if anybody would like to comment. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question does concern the whole issue dealing with caveats on land titles and property titles and the implications that they would cause or may cause if they were both properly and improperly applied to the title. To the member: I just would like your comments, based on your background dealing in real estate, on what that could possibly do not just to the homeowner but to the landowner or to the potential buyer.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. As a real estate broker, I mean, it is getting harder and harder and harder to sell or buy property. We know the rules around lending are much more strict than they've ever been. If you want to sell a farmer an acreage anymore, you have to do an environmental impact statement, those kinds of things, and on that statement you actually declare and you actually state that you know that this property is as you say it is and that the environmental impacts have all been looked at. This legislation here does not say that we actually are starting at a point of accuracy.

So as a landowner I state that I'm not aware of any fuel tanks being stored on the property, that I'm not aware of any massive disposal of manure, those kinds of things. I have to state that. I have no doubt that if I sold my property and the person buying it had the ability to prove that I could have known or should have known that my property gets flooded regularly even though I may be outside of a floodway or a flood zone, all because the mapping is not correct – I would be concerned about the ability for me to sell my house and how long after they could sue me.

I would alternatively be very concerned that we're putting professionals at risk by not giving them a clear place to start. Real estate agents already put their whole profession on the line every time they walk a client through the contract. They're expected to know every item of the contract. They're expected to advise their client how to properly sell, how to properly disclose. If you're saying to real estate agents, "You don't have to disclose because this is not in a floodway or in a flood zone," yet the very next year they are able to provide evidence from the local municipality that says, "Well, actually, it should have been, but we didn't update our maps," I would be highly suspicious of whether or not a judge would consider that. I'm not saying they would or they wouldn't.

I guess what I'm asking is: why would we put anybody in the position where they have the potential to reverse all of the hard work we do in here in creating legislation only because we didn't start at a point of accuracy? I'm not condemning this bill. I just think it is so, so, so important that we start with proper flood maps

that are actually accurate and not input some of these measures right now until we have that point. Some of the clauses in here certainly could go forward, but some of them need to protect homeowners, some of them need to protect the person who is selling, and we also need to protect the profession that's helping everyday Albertans go through that process. Then we need to protect the actual viability of these kinds of legislation so that they're not challenged in courts of law and putting all Albertans at risk.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: We have a minute and 23 seconds left. The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you. We've all seen a Fram filter, those of us who are old enough to remember: \$10, pay me now; or overhauling an engine, pay me later 3,000 bucks or something. This bill doesn't appear to make any reference to prevention and the great return that we would have seen and realized if preventative measures had been taken, as the Groeneveld report recommended. Do you have any feelings about that? Should this bill be addressing that? Should this be included now or under a separate act?

The Acting Speaker: Forty-four seconds, hon. member.

4:30

Mrs. Towle: Thank you. I absolutely do. I think the Groeneveld report, when you read it, is very in-depth, and it's a very good report. I don't think we need to rush through and talk about caveats on title until we actually get the accuracy of the maps. Mr. Groeneveld put in a lot of work, with a lot of consultation with municipalities, with stakeholders, with the government, and with experts that identified that the accuracy of the maps is key. He talked about that you need to have urban flood risk areas, that you need to have rural flood risk areas, and that you need to make sure that a map maintenance program is implemented. This is somebody who has done the hard work for you. Let's take a look at that and see how we make it better, and let's make sure that 2013 is better.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. [interjection] Yes, it is God's country, hon. member.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this bill this afternoon. It's one that's dear to my heart. I thought I'd just give some of the members a little background on myself in this regard before we start. I've spent a lot of time dealing with this matter over my life.

The fact is that I've lived along the Bow River and the Pine Creek all my life. We moved down there on the south side of the city in the late '50s. I've seen flooding almost yearly along the Bow River and the Pine Creek. It's been something that happens almost every year to some degree or another. Sometimes it's more drastic than what it has been in the past year, or it may be something that is absolutely horrendous the following year. You can never know what's going to happen. I've witnessed virtually all forms of incidents. I've even had to rescue people, including my own grandparents once from our farmyard, when we had to go and get a boat and drive right across the front of the yard to get them out of the building. That was back in the '60s, when we didn't have a lot of the new technologies we have today. Certainly, that was quite a horrendous situation, to say the least.

Later on, during my experience as a councillor from '04 to '07, I went and endured the '05 flood throughout the MD of Foothills. We had an awful lot of creeks and rivers and stream beds go crazy there. It flooded through the town of Okotoks, flooded through behind our office in High River, and it made a horrendous mess out of so many properties across so many landscapes. It was unbelievable. If you've been through the MD of Foothills at all, around Turner Valley, Black Diamond, Millarville, that is definitely God's country, and there certainly are an awful lot of watercourses, streams, natural drainage areas that come along and inflict their wrath upon landowners all the time there. It's certainly not an unusual situation when you're on council to receive calls at all times of the morning in the month of June regarding flooding. I can assure you.

I'm somewhat familiar, therefore, with some of things that are available to municipalities in terms of their emergency measures and the emergency orders they get and some of the procedures they have to follow. I remember driving around and around in some of the public works vehicles we had, looking at all of the different emergency situations we had: washed-out bridges, washed-out roads. You name it; we had it. Certainly, these things are occurring across Alberta in the spring. Now that I'm a provincial MLA, I have an even broader perspective on how fast the Good One up above can come along and cause us troubles when we have flooding issues.

I've also participated in some of those years in several hearings regarding flood mitigation, and I can recall on several occasions receiving many reports in the MD office in High River and looking over some of these kinds of measures they hoped to take and looking at all the different solutions in those days that they came up with that were never enacted. You know, it was at that time that I was serving on the board for the hon. Member for Highwood, Mr. Groeneveld, who put together the report that has been mentioned earlier here today, and I can tell you that I cannot describe enough how frustrated that fellow was when his report, that they spent so many days and weeks and hours on, had to be shelved due to the decision of the government of the day. It was unbelievable. We had a community that was at risk then. It was at risk for many years, but it continued to be at risk because of that action, in my opinion.

This summer for me – I had an awful lot of involvement in the flood. As a matter of fact, of all things, on the night of the flood, on July 19, I was in a meeting in Lundbreck, and it had been pouring for several hours. I drove across highway 3 to get to Lethbridge, of all places, because the next morning, out of pure coincidence, I was attending the Old Man River basin council's meeting about watersheds, their annual meeting. I went across highway 3 in one of the worst rainstorms I've ever been in. I got to the hotel in Lethbridge at about 3 in the morning. As a matter of fact, the next morning I saw the member there who is responsible for transparency. He drove through those floods, too, I believe, that night.

Anyway, to make it short, I was at the meeting for only a brief period of time, and my cellphone started ringing like mad early in the morning of July 20. I was summoned back to Black Diamond-Turner Valley because we'd had a pipeline rupture up there due to the flooding. While I'd known that there was flooding, I did not know the extent of the problem until I arrived up around Turner Valley-Black Diamond about 11 o'clock in the morning. We had the biggest ripping river event I've seen in my experience in Turner Valley-Black Diamond, and I've seen quite a few, but I have never seen logs and trees ripping down the sides of that gorge and just flattening everything that it engulfed. The trash is still there today, in fact. If you go over to Turner Valley-Black

Diamond and you look along the riverbank, you'll see crap laying everywhere. It is absolutely shocking, just shocking.

Later on, after that, I worked actually that evening for the MD of Foothills emergency operations centre for many hours, helping out with phone calls and so on there. We had people that day that we had to fly out of the Millarville area by helicopter because the Threepoint Creek had changed its course and gone flying across the middle of someone's field and isolated some people. They actually had to stand on the cab of their tractor, which was in the middle of the stream bed suddenly now. That was the highest point that they could find to get winched out. There were some unbelievable events this summer to deal with. We also had flooding in Livingstone-Macleod and a number of other areas, including Fort Macleod, down into Blairmore and at the Crowsnest Pass and many of the tributaries all the way along the eastern slopes. It was quite something to see.

In the meantime I had the occasion to work with some of the members on the other side, the ministers and so on. I had the occasion to work with some of their people and staff in ESRD, and I have to say that those are amazing people. They lent a hand when it needed to be lent. I have to say that they are wonderful. I've gotten to know those people more, and I have more appreciation for them as I get a chance to speak to them. I also had chances to interact with Minister McQueen, Minister Griffiths, Minister Hughes, and Minister Fawcett.

Mrs. Towle: No names.

Mr. Stier: Oh, I'm sorry. My apologies. Anyway, I apologize for my error, Madam Speaker.

To go further, all of these things were what we did to help the people of Alberta, and I think it was great to get all of this accomplished as fast as we could and try to get this done.

However, the new bill we have today seems a little thin. I was looking at it, and I can remember one of these meetings last year when one of our members went through the bill, and it didn't seem to have a lot of pages. Again, I see the same thing. It seems to me that we have a fairly dramatic event and a fairly complicated set of situations that we're discussing here, yet we don't seem to have a lot of detail. Recognizing that this is a process that we have to follow through and recognizing that there will be regulations, I suspect, to do with this, it just seems to me that it's a little thin.

You know, I recognize that it brings into play some of the things that we've been talking about all this summer, during the many meetings I attended on the DRP programs and so on, but these are enormous changes that will have enormous impact on peoples' lives, how they will be affected with their land values, all kinds of different things. Throughout the summer we have been talking, as some of the other members have tonight, about how we're going to actually proceed with these. The data that we're using: is it actually the data that we need to make to make these decisions?

4:40

Is it not correct that we need to be very careful here and not go down the wrong path? I know, from a little bit of an engineering background that I sometimes think I have, that we know we can't go ahead and proceed in a roughshod fashion. We have to ensure that this is the right set of measures to take. You know, it seems a little bit scary to me to go along with some of these ideas that we have, including what's here about the Emergency Management Act, without having some of this other information.

I had expressed earlier, by the way, too, in a similar vein with the cut-off for people to actually have their applications in – I was

worried, in a similar light, about that because we're cutting off at the end of this month coming for people to be able to put in their applications, and it's an enormous decision for people. They need as much time as possible. I wonder why we have to have that cut-off. We have sometimes up to two years for some flood recovery programs to be phased out. Why are we cutting it off just a few short months afterwards? I don't understand it.

I think that the changes here in this bill are a little vague. I'm really hoping that we could consider receiving some more information with regard to potential regulations that might be coming up. Much as I'd like to, I'd rather see a detailed plan. That's me. I like details. I'm one of those details guys. I can't support this as it is, but I'm very interested to participate in the debate as it proceeds.

With that, I'll end my comments. Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We have 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for your very touching, moving comments in the tribute that you paid and the acknowledgement you gave to those who worked so hard to help so many and for your own efforts in that regard. As always, you're a gentleman and someone who I look up to and admire. I really appreciate your thoughts. We didn't have enough time with the previous speaker, your thoughts on the priorities with regard to preventive measures that ought to be taken. Could you respond to that?

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, hon. member. Right from the start, when I have been involved with flooding, we have seen in my lifetime so many different rivers and stream beds change. In that experience I have seen where different municipalities have taken measures several times to do flood mitigation, whether it be dredging or armouring or replacing different pathways and so on like in urban areas and so forth.

Yet I guess it was this year that it was brought to light that we were probably doing that without looking at the real basic data that we need to base our decisions upon, and that would be the new elevations that happen every time that a flood occurs, the new changes of the watercourses, the deposits of gravel that are enormous. I wish I could show you all of the slides from behind my house of how that river has looked in the past versus what I see now. It's absolutely incredible. I've never seen a river look like that before.

My main theory is to go back to basic data, hon. member, start with that, work it up from there, and then look at not just one remedy. We have to look in most cases at several remedies for each location. I know that there's not just one answer to these things. Sometimes it could be a retention pond. Sometimes it could be an accumulation pond. It could be dredging. Sometimes it could be a spillway or a diversion like we're seeing might be proposed in High River. But my ideas would be based upon getting the data first, looking at all the possibilities, and then having stakeholder meetings and ensuring we're going about it in a very logical, linear fashion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others?

The hon. Minister of Human Services and Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This has been a wonderful afternoon of discussion, but I am conscious of the fact that the Member for Edmonton-Centre would like to speak on Bill

28 before the afternoon is over, so I would move that we adjourn debate on this bill at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 28 Modernizing Regional Governance Act

[Adjourned debate October 29: Mr. Griffiths]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: No. Go ahead.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Thank you very much to the Government House Leader and to my colleagues in the Wildrose. Gee, I'm feeling kind of special. I do appreciate the opportunity to speak in second reading to Bill 28, Modernizing Regional Governance Act. Okay. This is definitely something that a number of regions in the province have been asking for and waiting for, and in my opinion the idea of a growth management organization or board or agency is an excellent way of dealing with this. It signals an optimism in Alberta. It gives us a working model from which to make arrangements about growth and to develop some dispute resolution mechanisms.

Just for people that aren't aware of what's happening here, you know, we end up with a city or a town that ends up with a number of others that sort of start to cluster around the edge of it. In the case of Edmonton we have places like Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan but also the municipal districts and the counties that are out there like Strathcona county and Parkland county. We've got the town of Devon. We have St. Albert. So how do we develop a mechanism by which Edmonton can talk to those different groups about what kind of growth is going to happen and, even more interestingly, talk about shared services like bus connections or, you know, buses that are going to bring people from those centres into Edmonton and back out again?

There's lots of opportunity there for co-operation, for growth, for great planning, but you can also see where the disputes happen. You know, we're talking a lot in Edmonton and particularly through the last municipal election about how important it is for us to stop urban sprawl, to quit building new developments further and further out both because it's using valuable arable land out there – and why would we keep doing that if we've got great soil that we should use for planting, growing things? – but also because it's much more expensive in the infrastructure for cities to support constantly building new places on the edges of their cities. We need to have more people living in the cities that we've already built, increased density, multifamily units, townhouses, those kinds of things.

Well, that's great, but what do you do if you've decided that as a city or as a town, for example, and then the group next to you decides: well, hey, ho, let's have a bunch of acreages, have a little development on the edge of your border. Well, that's exactly what you didn't want, yet the people next door are now doing it, and you have no say about how they're going to manage that.

I've got to love it when you get people that want to live in the country – I'm going to get in trouble here – because of the peace and quiet and they love the country lifestyle and then the first thing they do is start complaining when the farmer is harvesting, because they don't like the noise of the combine and the dust from taking the crop off. You think: what did you think was going to happen when you were next to farmland?

4:50

So you can again see how the conflict starts to happen because those acreage owners are contacting their representatives who are going: okay; let me talk to the people that are in the municipal district or the county about if there's a rule about how late you can run combines. You know, in the cities we have noise bylaws. You can't do anything after 10 o'clock or before 7 in the morning. I kind of doubt those apply when you get into these outer reaches. There are lots of possibilities there. Great idea.

We actually used to have a similar body until the then member for Lloydminster, who was minister of many things but was certainly Dr. Destruction, as he was fondly called, disbanded them all. We've gone for quite a period of time without any kind of formal communication and planning venue. So lots of good reasons to have this bill.

Now, why are people so unhappy with this? If I could just take a quick stab at this, Madam Speaker, I think what has gone wrong here and certainly where I am very, very unhappy is in section 4, which is this validation of regulations. Now, we came to this place in time, having the bill in front of us now compared to last session or two sessions from now, I suspect because the government is in court being sued by one of the surrounding counties, Parkland, and there's a second one that I can't remember. Maybe it's already been resolved through the court process. What they were doing was saying that the regulation really didn't have effect; therefore, any decisions made by the regional board were null and void, so nothing should happen to Parkland.

Now we get a bill that says: "despite any decision of a court to the contrary made before or after the coming into force of this section," and then it goes through and basically says that whatever we've done under the regulation or under this act "is validated and declared for all purposes to have been validly made as of the date on which the regulation was made." Not only is it that we don't care what the court says – we're going to put it into legislation, and then it's going to be what we want in the legislation – but we're also going to backdate it to when the regulation was in place. Yowza. Talk about the powers of God. Like, holy mackerel. They can turn back time and all kinds of things. It's really amazing, Madam Speaker.

I thought: hmm, all right; maybe I'm just not getting the word "valid." So I looked it up, and it says: "executed in compliance with the law . . . legally or officially acceptable." Hmm. So really what this is is a notwithstanding clause. Oh, it went very quiet in here when I said that. My goodness.

Mr. Donovan: You can hear the crickets.

Ms Blakeman: Yep. Essentially that is what it is. It's saying that notwithstanding that this matter is before the courts and is being decided, we are going to decide and backdate it. What was in Harry Potter, where the gal had a time thing that went backwards? Time changer? Time machine? Something. Obviously not Harry Potter fans in here. Okay. But the time went backwards, and she was able to do stuff in the past – it's a perfect example, actually – that ran parallel to what's happening in the future. It's an excellent example of what the government is trying to do here.

I know the government thinks that it's all-powerful, but honestly you cannot turn back time. You just can't, and you really, really, must not give yourself notwithstanding clauses. You really must not do that. I would have been very keen to support this legislation, but I will not support something that is putting in a notwithstanding clause without a fair shake for other people. You know, I'm just not going to support it because it's putting itself above and beyond the law. It's saying: it doesn't matter what the

court says; we say that it's going to be this, and that's what it's going to be. No, no, no. There's a reason why we have a separation of the judicial branch, the Executive Council, and the legislative arm. There's a reason why, and we're supposed to respect each one of those and work with them in a respectful partnership. This is not doing that. This is stomping on a court decision and saying: it doesn't matter what it says; we're going to go backwards in time and make it all like it's the way we want it.

You know, I've talked about hubris a couple of times in this Assembly, which was a Greek term for humans that put themselves above the Gods, that thought they were so special and wonderful that they were equivalent to or even better than the Gods. You know, every time I use this example on you guys, I'm right, because the Gods come down and . . . [interjections] Oh, yeah. Hmm. That is a bit of personal hubris, isn't it? Every time I say this – and I say it carefully. I don't use it often. I don't abuse it. The Gods would come down and smite. They would smite the humans, right? This government, you're going to get smote, I tell ya, because you cannot play around with this stuff. You've probably had legal advisors who've told you what you wanted to hear, and you've gone ahead with it, but this is not right by any stretch of the imagination. That's the first little problem that I have with this.

It continues to go on and give itself all kinds of additional powers here, that they can go backwards and validate things. They can say that anything in a regulation that's referred to is validated and declared for all purposes to have been validly done. Wow. Even though you broke a law back here, we're now going to go back and say that you didn't break a law. It was okay what you did. Yikes. It also allows that the minister's approval of the capital regional growth plan is validated and declared for all purposes to have been validly approved. My goodness, they're fond of that word. I wonder if it's important to them. Yes, I think it is. It continues to be valid as if it had been approved under a certain section, and it goes on about how transitional regional evaluation frameworks are also validated, et cetera, et cetera. I think that's a major problem that you have here.

I know that the minister was bewildered at the scrum on the way into the Assembly today. What was the problem? Opposition members always want things not in regulation. They want it in the legislation, and now they're going to put it in the legislation, so why is everybody upset? Well, gosh, guys. I mean, look at some of the stuff you've done in here. You're trying to turn back time. You're making things valid because you say so, not because of the way the courts rule.

Then you get into some things a little further on that I'm sure other people are going to raise. You actually make it so that if some poor county employee or municipal employee doesn't do something – and there are no limits placed on that – literally, anything that is required in writing by the growth management board of the chief elected official of a municipality, they must provide that information that the growth management board requires. The only limitation that's placed on that is that it can't be subject to any type of legal privilege. Any information – any information – that that management board asks for that is not already protected under a solicitor-client privilege must be provided. Whoa. There are no other limitations on this.

Once again, we see a government that rather than devolving, as they say – I'm just at the point now where if the government says "transparent," I can feel this huge black cloud of obfuscation descending, because when they say it, it means exactly the opposite. It means that they're going to do totally the opposite thing. When they say accountable, it means no accountability. When they say transparent, darkness.

Here we now have this, where they're talking about throwing people in jail for not providing this information. I mean, truly? I know that the minister said: "What are you upset about? That was in the other version of the act, and we're just repeating it here. What's the big deal?" Well, I would say: what on earth did you have it in the other act for, that you would require an employee to provide any information to a municipal growth board without limitation except on solicitor-client privilege, and if they don't do it and are found guilty, then they're liable for a personal fine of \$10,000 or to be thrown in jail for a year? Really? I mean, come on. That just seems a bit – I don't know – over the top. What's that phrase? Jumping the shark. I think we might have a little jumping-the-shark moment here in this bill.

5:00

Mr. Donovan: Never heard that one.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, come on, you guys. Do you not watch *Happy Days*? The Fonz? They did a program where they went to the beach, and the Fonz surfboarded over a shark. It was just way too much. It was just not believable. So everything now is referred to as jumping the shark. Gee, you guys.

This bill jumps the shark in that: you're going to do that to an employee? So people are using words like "draconian" and "medieval" and "feudal" and all of those kinds of things. And you know what? They're right. Because that is what this is. This was supposed to be a co-operation bill. This was supposed to be something we were all looking forward to for regional planning purposes. How this government manages to take that good idea and turn it into something that is . . .

Mr. Bilous: Evil.

Ms Blakeman: Oh. Evil. I'm hearing "evil" from behind me.

But you do start thinking: man, are they going to put them on one of those wheels where they turn them around and stretch them? I mean, for heaven's sake, give the guy or the woman a break. Information must be provided, section 708.17(1). Good Lord. I think you've got a problem with this bill.

You know, I really feel for the Government House Leader, who thought that this was going to be clear sailing. Although he did warn us all that we may be sitting here for longer than we thought, so maybe he did see this one coming. But this bill can't go like this. It just can't, not when we have a government that is knowingly refusing to abide by the decision of a court and is putting itself ahead of that, where we have clauses that insist that people hand over any information without context, without limitation to that short of client-solicitor privilege.

Then we get into the growth management boards, which, as I said, I think should be a good idea. But you need to look carefully at language and at section headings when you look at bills. In division 1, the establishment and operation of growth management boards, the first section is must-dos, and then there is a whole "may" section, so they may do this. The must-dos are the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Once again it's cabinet. It's not the Assembly. It's not an all-party committee. It's not the backbenchers. I mean, goodness, can you not give your backbenchers some credit here, please? It's:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council, . . . which is cabinet

. . . on the recommendation of the Minister, may establish a growth management board by regulation.

You know, why can't the local authorities decide they want to do this and ask the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the minister to

do it? But no. The minister is going to say this, and it's going to happen. The regulation establishing this board must

- (a) specify the name of the . . . board,
- (b) designate the municipalities that are members . . .

God forbid if you're in that region and you don't want to be part of this. Tough bananas. The minister and the cabinet are going to decide that you're in, whether you like it or not. And they must

- (c) designate all or part of the land lying within the boundaries of the participating municipalities . . .

as what the growth is.

So that's the stuff that must happen. I think there are all kinds of reasons about, you know, why this seems just a bit over the top, why there's not more consultation with the municipalities that you're supposed to be dealing with.

Then we get into the "may" section, and that's actually a very long one because it talks about how they may appoint people to represent the participating municipalities. Well, how nice. Seeing as they're now all part of this growth management board, it would be really nice if they did have representatives on the board, but that's not necessary because the government "may" deal with it. They may appoint the chair and an interim chair. They may establish voting rights of participating municipalities. How lovely that they might do that.

Mr. Anderson: Make it voluntary. Make it voluntary.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, that's fine. He's exercised about it. That's fine, Madam Speaker.

So we're talking about: may establish voting rights, may do the mandate. You know, this is stuff that they should have been doing. This is what the municipalities and the MDs and counties need to be negotiating betwixt themselves, not having it overlaid by some sort of feudal overlord who is going to say: this is what you're going to have to deal with.

I know that these municipalities don't always get along. We have in this Assembly an expert in making the city of Edmonton really cranky, and she did it for a long time. You know, there can be disputes on these things, and sometimes the government gets pulled in to sort of try and settle the dispute between the feuding municipalities. But, Madam Chairperson, that is more about a dispute resolution mechanism than it is about the cabinet coming in and saying: you're going to do it the way we tell you to. This is showing once again that this government doesn't respect municipalities. It still sees them as the children of the province, and that is so wrong.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'm sorry. There is no 29(2)(a) with the hon. member's presentation. It will be after the next speaker. So, hon. Member for Airdrie, you are next in line.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Madam Chair. When I first saw this bill, I knew I'd be speaking to it, being the Municipal Affairs critic, and it is mind-numbingly dumb. I know I'm not supposed to say that about bills. We got admonished in the House the other day for referring to another type of bill. Anyway, I'll try and be nice about this.

Bill 28, the Modernizing Regional Governance Act, is a very, very seriously flawed piece of legislation. It tramples local autonomy totally, it pits municipalities against municipalities, and it concentrates even more power with the provincial government. I

am thoroughly disappointed that this government has introduced something so heavy handed and, yes, even draconian. This is not a walk softly and carry a big stick type of legislation. This is legislation that wears big boots and carries a baseball bat.

I'd like to go back to autonomy for just a few minutes. I was 11 years a municipal politician and 11 years on the AUMA board of directors, and I've never seen anything like this. As a municipal politician I was used to being looked upon by the provincial government as a lower form of governance. We were children that needed to be guided and steered and controlled but never anything like this. As an AUMA board member many years ago I was co-chair of an urban-rural cost-sharing task force, and we dealt with these kinds of issues and municipalities learning to share cost control and a number of things. We worked on that report for two and a half years, and we made some really good recommendations out of that. We consulted with other municipalities. Today that report, as far as I know, is sitting on a shelf somewhere with about eight or nine years of dust on it. I'm suggesting that that may have helped with this bill in some form, but it probably wasn't even looked at.

The act was put through without any consultation whatsoever, and it establishes the province's authority to force municipalities to enter into regional planning boards and imposes strict controls on such bodies. My question to the minister would be: why on earth did you not consult with municipalities before doing this? And I mean true consultation, not a dog-and-pony information session like we had with the land bills: 50, 36, 24, and 19. I attended some of those, and that's just what they were. They were telling you what they were doing. There wasn't true consultation, and that's what's needed here before this goes any further.

5:10

The penalties for municipalities that don't co-operate with the imposed planning boards are severe, including, believe it or not, stiff fines and jail time. Jail time in today's day and age for senior officials: I thought I woke up and we had lost six or seven decades of time and we were back in the Second World War and had lost the war. I mean, come on. Jail time for municipal officials for not supplying information. Good grief.

I don't think that forcing municipalities into centralized models of governance is the best way to make any friends, and it sure as heck isn't throwing them in jail. This seems to be just the latest chapter in a long line of laws and policies that concentrate power in the hands of the province at the expense of locally elected governments.

How on earth do we expect the public at large to view this or expect existing municipal politicians to run for office again? Why would you bother? Why on earth would you bother trying to assume responsibility for your community? It's beyond me.

Mr. Wilson: A week after the election.

Mr. Rowe: A week after the election. A very good point. And a month or six weeks away from both conventions. I'll give you a warning right now, members of the government. When you go to those conventions, you're going to be held accountable for this piece of legislation.

Having been a mayor of an Alberta municipality, I'll tell you that if I was still the mayor – I don't know – I would be hopping mad if I saw this trying to be rammed down our throats. I'm already hopping mad, and I'm just an MLA. But I sure don't want to be part of a government that does this to municipalities or to the people of Alberta.

Bill 28 might be the most heavy-handed piece of municipal legislation that has ever been conceived in this Assembly. I would challenge anybody to question that. My colleagues and I agree that if it passes as it is, it will essentially strip away what local autonomy municipal governments have left. Under the act regional planning boards would have to align their objectives with the province's regional plans. Municipalities could not undertake planning initiatives, public works, or pass bylaws that don't comply with the provincially adopted boards, who will report to the minister.

I think it's appropriate at this time in my comments that I refer to the bill itself, especially section 708.02, where the government will have the power to designate the municipalities that are the members of the growth management board. Whether you want to be or not, you're it, you're in, and no opt-out clause is allowed. Then to top that off, they have the power to appoint the persons to represent the participating municipalities. Take careful note. It does not say that those people shall be the elected officials from those municipalities. It could be PC friends that they owe a favour to. It could be anybody. How on earth can you represent a municipality that you're not an elected official in? It makes no sense. Then to top that off, they get to appoint the chair of that board. Again, it doesn't have to be an elected municipal official of that area.

Then this one is really – they get to determine the voting rights of the participating municipalities. Does that mean that municipality A gets 10 votes or 100 votes on a board, and a little small community or a county only gets one? Where's the democracy in that?

I don't know any municipalities that are speaking out in favour of this legislation, not that there have been any consultations, not that many of them didn't find out about this until yesterday or even knew about it.

With regard to the government's relationship with municipalities this is blatantly opaque and goes against any sort of transparent relationship that the government might be preaching. They're all about accountability. They're all about transparency. Not here.

As a closing thought, I just want to know what municipalities are saying about this first, before the government pushes this bill through. Unless I'm missing something, this looks like it'll have serious consequences for decision-makers at the local level. I strongly urge that we slow down on this one and talk about some of the negative things that could come out of it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We now have 29(2)(a) if anybody would like to respond. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: I'd like the hon. member, who was mayor of Beiseker and at one time a member of the CRP, the Calgary Regional Partnership, if I'm not mistaken – hon. member, I believe your town withdrew from the CRP or wasn't a part of it for whatever reason, because it didn't fit their needs. I'd like you to kind of expound on this voluntary aspect. Why on earth would this government give a power for a minister to be able to force a municipality to join a regional planning board without their permission, without their buy-in? Why would they do that, and how can that possibly be effective?

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, hon. member. Just for clarification's sake, we were not a member of the Calgary regional plan. We investigated joining it. We were asked to get involved in it, as the

community just south of us had, the town of Irricana. We looked at it, and to be perfectly frank, we didn't see any value in it. We didn't see what that board could offer us that we couldn't already do ourselves. We already had our own planning group. We already made our own decisions regarding development and business and so on. So we just didn't see any value in it.

I'm all for regional collaboration, voluntary regional collaboration. Many of us in the province and many municipalities are doing it now. When I did my northern tour and talked to municipalities – the town of Valleyview has a great relationship with the county. That county gives each community in the county \$2 million a year: it's yours to do with as you like. That's true collaboration and true co-operation between municipalities. But when you force someone into an agreement, it just doesn't work. This is a democracy. It has to be voluntary.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

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

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just ask the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills if he would not concede that in view of the sprawling developments that are happening around the major cities in Alberta, there needs to be some changes made in terms of planning, regional planning. He talks about collaboration, but when collaboration turns into a competition for tax revenues and intense developments are happening around those cities, it seems like there is a desperate need for some sort of an overall regional planning document.

We used to have that, as the member would probably remember. We threw the baby out with the bathwater, though, at some point in time and did away with the regional planning authorities. Would he not concede that given the way that Alberta is growing and the growth around our major cities, we do need some sort of an integration of planning to plan for the future for things like transportation and utility corridors? The intense development that's happening around there may be completely inconsistent with what we want to do in the future.

5:20

Mr. Rowe: Thank you for the question. It is a good one. I fully agree that regional co-operation has to happen, but there's a limit to just where the authority should be able to take that. If you get people around a table and you just talk out issues, generally they'll work themselves out. The minute you dictate something, that "you shall," people's backs get up. They're elected officials. They have the right to represent their municipality and their constituents or people the way they see fit, not the way someone else sees fit. You can't say to one community: "You can develop, but you can't. You can bring industry into your municipality; you can't." How do you think that's right? You have to be co-operative. You have to share things.

That's where you get back to the voting issue. When one community has a veto power over another, it's never going to work. It's just never going to work. You've got to bring reasonable people to a table and come to a reasonable agreement on development, on industry, on business. You're right. It has to happen, but it can't happen like this. It can't happen under the thumb of a government that pushes this kind of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 28, Modernizing Regional Governance

Act. At the outset I just want to share with members of the House that this government is continuing to set new precedents or ignore parliamentary courtesies, shall we say. My staff members repeatedly tried to set up a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs' office, phoned and e-mailed numerous times, and received no response whatsoever regarding this bill other than a two-page letter that was sent at 2:44 p.m. the day that the minister introduced this bill. There is a history of courtesy that is extended to the opposition parties to give them a little bit of notice before a bill is introduced, and clearly this just shows the level of respect that the minister has for the opposition.

I'll continue on that path, really, because in a few short hours I've spoken with a few different mayors and representatives from around the province of Alberta about this bill, and I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that first and foremost, the major issue and concern is that again this government is, I guess, being consistent with their lack of consultation, as they often do when they bring forward pieces of legislation that involve our aboriginal communities. Here in this piece of legislation, to my knowledge, neither the AUMA or AAMD and C, including municipalities within the province of Alberta, were consulted on this bill. This bill has caught many Albertans flat footed and off guard, which is one of the main concerns that has been shared with me.

Madam Speaker, there are numerous issues that I have with this bill, but I want to make my position clear. First of all, the concept of a regional growth plan is absolutely necessary. I do think that, you know, in our province there are many municipalities, and in order to move forward, to develop in a sustainable, smart method or path, we need municipalities to work together. Doing some regional planning absolutely makes sense, and I'll talk a little bit about what that should entail.

But I can tell you at the outset that this bill does not do that whatsoever. You know, railroading a bill through and imposing how municipalities govern and their ability to govern, first of all, is not just disgracing democracy; what it shows is this government's true attitude towards municipalities and municipal governments. As opposed to treating them as an order of government and partners at a table, this government continues to bring forward legislation that treats municipalities like little kids and treats them in a very, very paternalistic method.

The regional growth plan: a great idea, especially when we're looking at sharing resources, when we're looking at transportation, transportation corridors, when we're looking at how we bring utilities to different parts of the province as well as growing and expanding in the best way possible. I am in favour of a regional growth plan, but it needs to be based on a spirit of co-operation, of equal partnership.

My view – and this comes from my teaching background – is that you get a much better response if you treat people with respect and try to use positive reinforcements to get, maybe, the behaviour you're looking for as opposed to running around with a big wooden stick and, you know, intimidating and threatening students. So this is very similar. As opposed to working with municipalities and providing incentives for regions to work together more collaboratively, this government has chosen the route of the heavy-handed approach, and literally if they don't like what municipalities are saying, then they're going to just force them to do whatever they will.

I'm going to go through Bill 28. There's much to go through here, and there are many, many problems with it. I mean, you know, to summarize this bill in a sentence, it's giving sweeping powers to the minister and cabinet, which are going to actually not just take away from the authority of municipalities, but it will

actually inhibit elected officials from doing their job. I'll go through and explain how and where.

The concept of the growth management board is a board that's going to be established. Now, this board, one may ask: "How is it chosen? How is it selected?" It's not municipalities that voluntarily choose to participate. It is imposed. They are told that they must participate, and they have no choice in that matter. So I find it really ironic in the bill when it talks about participating municipalities to give the impression that, hey, they volunteered. No. They were more volun-told or ordered to participate.

You know, once the municipalities are selected to participate – the cabinet has sweeping powers to designate the municipalities that are participating but also whom the municipalities would like to represent them. A reminder to most members: yes, there are other regional growth boards that exist, or there is a Capital Region Board, but one of the major differences is that the municipalities in that board choose whom they're going to send as their representative. They're not being told who will represent them, which, again, gives the minister the opportunity to cherry-pick and decide: "Hey, you know what? If there's an outspoken counsellor or mayor that has a different vision from my own and what I want to see in this province, how it grows, then they're not going to have a voice at the table, and I'll choose someone who has a more friendly view to my own."

Again, I mean, the appointment of persons to represent the participating municipalities: the minister has sweeping powers to determine the voting rights. Again, depending on how they want to weigh a certain vote or decision, that's at the minister's discretion or at the cabinet's discretion.

In addition, the minister and the cabinet have the ability to outline the power, duties, and functions of this regional growth board. I mean, really, this board is going to be a hand-picked group of municipalities that has no say in it whatsoever. They're told who will represent them, who'll be at the table.

5:30

They've also taken away the powers of autonomy in the sense that this board will be hand-picked, told what to do. They're given a growth plan to write, which is really just a rubber-stamp exercise because in this growth plan they'll be given their objectives, the contents, timeline, form, effect, process. All of that will be told to them. Really, they'll write up a document that is already pre-written, rubber-stamp it, and give it back. Madam Speaker, it's unbelievable how this bill has completely ignored and will ignore the autonomy of local municipalities and their ability to govern and to make laws that obviously affect the citizens in their municipalities.

Moving on to, well, the annual report. I mean, that's another issue. When they do produce an annual report, is it made public? By now anyone who's spent any amount of time in this Chamber knows that rarely do reports go public. They always get reported to the minister. This one, again, is reported to the minister, not given out to the public at all.

Another flaw with this current bill, Madam Speaker, is that any municipalities that are participating in one of these regional boards will not be able to undertake any public work, improvement, or structure; make a bylaw or pass a resolution; enter into a municipal agreement; or adopt a statutory plan. So most of the powers that municipal governments have will be taken away from them if they are participating in this regional board. Again, the irony here is that they have no choice as to whether or not they can participate in this board. They are being forced to by the minister and by this government.

Madam Speaker, this bill is, as others have mentioned – I mean, draconian is a great word – heavy-handed. It's a bill that this government often takes the same approach on in that there is no consultation, there is no input given from municipalities or the major organizations representing municipalities – AAMD and C and AUMA – as far as their input on this.

Now, you know, the minister I'm sure in due time will get up and speak to the need for regional growth plans and municipalities working together in co-operation and in consultation with each other. I mean, that first part, yes, I agree a hundred per cent. But the method to encourage municipalities to work together is not through forced legislation where you strip them of their authority and power and, basically, put a bunch of puppets into these boards to make decisions on behalf of municipalities. I encourage the other side of the House to read the act. I'm not even sure if the minister understands the scope and power that this bill will give him and this government and, again, strip from municipalities.

Just flipping through my notes here, Madam Speaker, again, it's frustrating to see the approach that this government is taking on Bill 28. I can tell you that, like I said, there are lots of alarm bells that are going off around the province about this bill. Different organizations, municipalities are scrambling to go through it to try to interpret and understand the broad, sweeping powers that this bill has. You know, in some conversations I've had, some elected officials think that maybe the government is trying to address very specific issues in certain regions and is taking a very broad-stroke approach to trying to solve that problem.

My concerns are that we're really taking away the autonomy and powers of municipal governments by this government deciding who participates, how they participate, who represents them, what they can and cannot do, the authority that they have, and in all of this, those decisions can be trumped by the minister. The minister can step in at any point in time and force municipalities to partake in this.

As the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills brought up, a very valid concern is the clause that deals with – let me just find it here, Madam Speaker. It talks about the consequences, if I may, as far as information that must be provided. If a member contravenes this subsection, they can be hauled off to jail for a year and fined personally up to \$10,000. I can tell you that there are many Albertans that are clearly shocked that this clause exists, that this government is bringing in something like this through legislation in a bill.

Again, I mean, in the face of the fact that we just had municipal elections throughout the province, there have been elected officials that I've spoken with who have said: you know, had I been told this was going to come through two weeks after I was elected, I might have thought twice about running for election now that I can be hauled off to jail.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We have 29(2)(a). Are there any members who would like to comment using the five minutes?

The hon. Member for Little Bow, not on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Donovan: I'll pass it on.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Where do you start with a bill like this, you know? This is one of those bills that you just get up – I thought we were going to have a nice, friendly fall session. A little bit of housekeeping. We're going to get the Premier through her leadership, which we all want. And then this gets pulled.

An Hon. Member: You're not so convinced.

Mr. Anderson: That's right. We're not as convinced.

You know, I just don't understand this bill. It's one thing to empower. If this bill was an empowerment bill, if it was a bill that empowered local municipalities to voluntarily come together and work together on some regional co-operation issues – mass transit, transportation issues, affordable housing issues, shared recreational facilities, all kinds of possible co-operative issues – that empowered local communities to come together and co-operate, then it would be a good bill. It would be a good bill. But that's not what this bill does. This bill is a piece of junk. [interjection] That's right. It's not the law yet, so it's a piece of junk. This bill is an embarrassment. That's what this bill is. It's an embarrassment to any party that claims at all that they are committed to protecting the local autonomy of municipalities in this province. It's an embarrassment.

I don't understand, for example, if you're going to bring a bill like this in, why would you have a clause in the bill that makes it nonvoluntary? Why would you specifically point out that the minister can choose whatever municipality he wants to be included in one of these regional board areas? There's no say by the regional municipality. It doesn't say "may." It's not voluntary. He may choose, and that municipality is then bound. Why would you do that? Why not make it optional for these municipalities so that there could be co-operation, so that people don't feel like they have a gun to their head, metaphorically speaking, when they're making decisions about their own autonomy?

5:40

Mr. Griffiths: Which sections says that?

Mr. Anderson: Which section says it? It's good to know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has not read his bill. That's great to know.

It says specifically in 708.02(2)(b):

(2) The regulation establishing a growth management board must . . .

(b) designate the municipalities that are members of the growth management board.

That's your decision, sir. You will make that decision. That's what it says. Read your bill. I know you have no training in this area of reading bills, but now you can do it. That's where it is.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, through the chair, please.

Mr. Anderson: It's unbelievable. It's not voluntary. No matter what he says. He can say that he's going to consult, that he's going to ask his municipalities if they want to be involved in it or not. He can say that, but that's not what the bill says. It's not voluntary. He gets to choose. He will decide. The minister and the Executive Council, by extension the Premier. That's what it says. I don't understand why this minister would open up this can of worms like this. There's no reason for it. It's so disrespectful to what municipalities that are trying to co-operate are doing.

Now, I'm not going to sit here and speak about the Capital Region Board, because that's not my area. I've heard lots of things, some good and some not so good, so I'm going to leave that to other folks to speak about. But I am going to talk about this bill as it affects my area in Airdrie.

Mr. Hancock: Which it doesn't.

Mr. Anderson: Which it doesn't. According to the Minister of Human Services this doesn't affect anybody.

Why even have the bill, then, if it doesn't affect anybody? Why have the bill? If you've already done it in regulations and you're worried about getting sued by Parkland county, why would you pass a bill in order to take care of a legal dispute with one county? It's insane. That's not what this bill does. It's much broader than that. That's not what good governments do. They don't respond to a lawsuit by Parkland county with a piece of legislation that changes fundamentally the way that municipalities are governed in this province. It makes no sense.

The other issue, the one that I want to talk more about, is the issue of consultation. How can you pass a piece of legislation this massive knowing the problems, knowing the challenges that occurred with the Capital Region Board, knowing that there are some concerns there at the very least, and then take it and say: now we're going to enable the minister to, on a whim, unilaterally create these boards all across wherever he wants, include whoever he wants in them, and we're just going to create this mechanism for that to happen? Why do that?

If you feel the need to force regionalization on people, at least have the guts to say which area you're going to regionalize in this Legislature. At least come here with a bill that says you're going to do it. Don't pass a piece of enabling legislation that enables you to do it whenever you want without having to come back to this House. Just one day we wake up, and: "Oh, look. Regionalization has been legislated in the Calgary region. That's awesome. Too bad we don't have any say on it." They can do that once this bill is passed. They will have total power to do whatever they want when it comes to deciding the regional governance in this province without having to be accountable for it once this is done.

There was absolutely no consultation on this. None. We know that. We phoned the Calgary mayor's office. We phoned the Edmonton mayor's office. I would note that the Edmonton mayor today has said that he's okay with it, and that leads to another problem. I guarantee you that this legislation will pit communities, particularly our two biggest cities, against their neighbours, and that is bad government. That should never be the case. There should be voluntary co-operation because we want to co-operate, not forced co-operation. And that is what's going to go on here. It's wrong.

Now, I'm going to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 28, Modernizing Regional Governance Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 28, Modernizing Regional Governance Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will severely undermine local autonomy and that further input is necessary from the public, municipal officials, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties.

I'd like to send this out. You need the original, don't you?

The Acting Speaker: I think that you're all aware that we're pausing just for a moment while we get a copy of the motion to each member in the House.

Hon. member, if you would like to continue, you have six minutes.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. The copies that you have in front of you will show what the amendment says again. One of the most offensive parts of this entire bill is the fact that no consultation has been done. This bill clearly has impact on the city of Edmonton and its surrounding communities. We know for a fact that they were not consulted about this bill. This bill has the opportunity to greatly affect, has the possibility of fundamentally

affecting in a very personal way the city of Calgary and, obviously, the city of Airdrie, the town of Chestermere, the town of Cochrane, Okotoks, High River, you name it, in the Calgary region. None of them – none of them – were consulted about this. Some of the biggest advocates of the CRP, including my own mayor, Mayor Peter Brown, were completely blindsided by this. So it's not that they're against regional planning, and they're not against regional co-operation. They're okay with that. They were completely blindsided by this bill.

Of course, you just have to wonder about the timing as well. Why wait till one week after the municipal elections, which happen once every four years now, to all of a sudden throw this out there? Why wasn't this released prior? Why wasn't there a consultation process prior so that this could have been debated in our communities over the last year or couple of months to see what the mayors' and councillors' positions are on these things? But no. One week after the election, bang, here it is. It makes no sense to people. Why would you do this without any consultation?

I don't know – obviously, I can't speak for the Assembly on the speed of this – how fast this is going to go through, but if we do pass it within the next couple of weeks, if that's forced through closure or any other parliamentary technique on the other side, it will be passed before the AUMA and the AAMD and C have the opportunity to debate it at their conferences. It'll be law by the time it gets to those conferences. They barely have any time to even prepare to debate something of this magnitude, but they won't even have the chance because it'll be the law.

Why would you do this, minister? Why? Why not let the people know what you're going to do so that you can get the bill right? Why just dump it in everyone's lap?

5:50

I heard on the radio today the minister say: "Oh, well, nothing's changed. This was just in the regulations." Well, we went and looked at the regulations. Lots of changes, lots of fundamental changes from the regulations. It is not just putting the regulations into law. It's much broader than that. We'll get to that in Committee of the Whole, one by one. It'll be a slow and painful process, but we need to go through that. It is very different from the regulations. It affects not just the capital region, as I said, but all regions. Once it's passed, the minister will be able to do whatever he wants with regard to regional governance in this province without any check or balance from this House.

And if you're going to fundamentally change – I mean, take a look at this. It's amazing.

708.12(1) Despite any other enactment, no participating municipality shall take any of the following actions that conflict or are inconsistent with a growth plan:

- (a) undertake a public work, improvement, structure or other thing;
- (b) adopt a statutory plan;
- (c) make a bylaw or pass a resolution;
- (d) enter into a municipal agreement.

In other words, the municipality can't wipe their nose – they cannot wipe their nose, frankly – without its complying with the growth plan. The growth plan will be determined – we all hope in consultation, but she sure doesn't have to consult – by the cabinet and the government and this minister. If you're going to change something that fundamental, you would think that you might want to ask our thousands of elected municipal officials around the province about it and get their opinion on it, ask them: "Is this going too far? Is this really necessary?"

You would think that by making it nonvoluntary, by giving, as I read earlier, the minister the power to, if you look at 2(b) under 708.02,

- (b) designate the municipalities that are members of the growth management board, and
- (c) designate all or part of the land lying within the boundaries of the participating municipalities as the growth region for the growth management board,

it would be run by the AAMD and C – obviously, its members would be affected greatly – as well as the AUMA. You would think that Calgary would be consulted and Airdrie and Cochrane and Okotoks and High River and Chestermere. You'd think that Parkland county would be consulted and Sherwood Park and Leduc.

Of course, does this just affect Calgary region and Edmonton region? The answer is no. It affects Fort McMurray. They're a growing, bustling city. They're going to have all kinds of regional growth issues in the years going forward. It affects the Lethbridge region and Medicine Hat region.

An Hon. Member: Red Deer.

Mr. Anderson: Obviously, the Red Deer region. Grande Prairie, possibly.

This has huge effects long term. Why would we not consult with the municipalities on something this large? It's not right.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie has introduced a reasoned amendment. Are there any other members who would like to speak to the amendment?

Before we have another speaker, we do have 29(2)(a) if there is anybody who would like to comment or ask the Member for Airdrie on this amendment. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You've been talking about consultation. When an effect like this is going to come on municipalities – we just saw the elections coming forward, and many of the councillors have changed, and many of the mayors have changed. Would that not have been a good opportunity for outgoing mayors, incoming mayors to have this sort of a discussion with their communities during that election process? You know, they should have the time before to prepare for their elections. This is something that's going to be greatly effected across the whole province. I'd like to hear your comments on some more of that consultation and what it meant for the elections and possibly before and after.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you for that, hon. member. You know, it's so true. We have a new mayor in Edmonton, who seems like a very bright individual.

An Hon. Member: He supports this.

Mr. Anderson: Yeah, he supports this. That's absolutely right. You're hitting again on one of the problems, which is that many of the outlying communities are not going to support it, and the two big cities' mayors may support it. I don't know. I can't speak for Mayor Nenshi, obviously. He hasn't commented on it yet. It's going to pit communities against each other. That's one of the biggest problems with this whole thing, and it's so unnecessary to do it that way, so divisive. It always has to be divisive. My way or the highway. That's not the way to do it.

Anyway, we have a new mayor in Edmonton, obviously. He seems like a very bright individual. He's going to obviously be putting together his staff and all that sort of thing, and a week later he has to deal with this piece of legislation. Obviously, we have several new councillors in Calgary, several new councillors in the city of Edmonton, and we know that the mayor doesn't speak for those councillors. They all have their independent views on what should happen.

Then you get outside of Edmonton and Calgary, and there's been even more turnover. There's a new mayor in Red Deer. I haven't gone over . . . [interjection] Pardon me? [interjection] Oh, that's right. She hasn't even had a chance to look at this.

You can go right through. We have several new councillors on our local Airdrie city council as well as in Rocky View. They're just getting their feet wet on this stuff. They have not seen this before. We've got to make sure that they have an opportunity to look at it. Not just look at it. I mean, we've been phoning some of the councillors from our ridings, and they're saying the same thing. I'll read a letter in Committee of the Whole about what one said about it. They're saying: "Look. I can't even understand. This is the first bill I've ever read." They need time to be able to analyze this. That means getting the right staff and making sure they get time for a report. All those things have to happen.

Folks, wake up over there. Wake up. You don't just shove stuff like this through. It's undemocratic. Consult with these communities first. Get their input, and then you can come with a piece of legislation that empowers communities, after you've consulted with them. There are examples of times when ministers across the way have done the proper consultation and have gotten it pretty close to right, if not a hundred per cent right. Then we have other times, whether it's land-use bills or this bill, where you don't do any consultation, and you have an unmitigated disaster on your hands. I'm trying to warn you here. You're going to get plastered on this. It's going to be very divisive, and it doesn't need to be.

Do the consultation. One of the things I guarantee they'll tell you is: please make it voluntary. Don't force it on us.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but it is now 6 o'clock, and we will be adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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