



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 11, 2015

Issue 18

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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

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Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie (PC)
Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (Ind)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
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Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
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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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Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)
Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),
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Dirks, Hon. Gordon, Calgary-Elbow (PC)
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Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)
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Vacant, Spruce Grove-St. Albert

Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, hon. members.

Let us pray. As we fulfill our duties today, may we find patience whenever disagreement arises, may we find strength whenever weakness appears, and may we find determination whenever uncertainty besets us. Amen.

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Election Anniversaries and Birthdays

The Speaker: Hon. members, just before we go to Introduction of Guests, may I take a moment to remind ourselves that we have two members today, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre and the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, who are celebrating their 18th election anniversary year as members of this Assembly. Congratulations, Edmonton-Centre and Calgary-Fort.

As well, please join me in acknowledging and congratulating a member who received one of the best birthday presents she could have yesterday, the hon. Member for Calgary-North West. Happy birthday.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Let us move on to school groups for introduction. Let's start with the hon. Member for Sherwood Park, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly visitors from Wes Hosford elementary school, located in the heart of my constituency of Sherwood Park. These bright young students, their inspirational teachers, and dedicated volunteer helpers are seated in both the public and members' galleries, and I would ask that they please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the brightest students that Alberta has to offer from Saint-André academy in Beaumont. The school opened in September, and it is full. They are accompanied by their teacher, Miss Colette Chamulka, and two parent helpers, Mrs. Trenda Willcott and Mrs. Shauna Reynolds. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, did you have an introduction as well?

Ms Blakeman: I have it in my notes that I do, but I believe they're coming in at 2 o'clock, so if I may, I'll preannounce them, and that is to give a very warm welcome to the students' union of MacEwan University, which is located, of course, in the fabulous constituency

of Edmonton-Centre. Please join me in giving a prewelcome to those members that will join us at 2 o'clock.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there other school or university groups?

Seeing none, let's move on to other important guests, starting with Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and followed by Edmonton-Decore.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Renaye Wade and her mother, Tammy Wade. Renaye and Tammy have come here today to raise awareness on distracted driving. Renaye had her life changed forever when she was struck by a semi two years ago this month. Renaye has suffered multiple injuries and a devastating brain injury. These tragic consequences bring Renaye here today to advocate for awareness and greater penalties. You will never know what it's like to walk in her shoes. I would like Renaye and Tammy to please rise – they are seated in the members' gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome.

Mrs. Sarich: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour and privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly five very proud guests from the Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton, a very active not-for-profit organization established in 2012. My heartfelt best wishes for this organization's important leadership, strength, and the steadfast support given to improve lives and to advance the skills that Albertans and others need in our interconnected world. My guests are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and remain standing as I mention their names: Mr. Dhiaa Raheem, president, Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton; Mr. Ashraf Noor AL-Deen, vice-president, Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton; Mr. Sarmad Atalah, past president and founder, Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton; Mrs. Salool Alrashed, director and founder, Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton; Mrs. Nazik Zaidan, secretary, Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton. Mr. Kassm Kassm, treasurer, Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton, extended his regrets as he wasn't able to join us today. I would now ask the Assembly to please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An honour and a privilege today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three very special guests, and I'll ask each of them to rise as I introduce them. Firstly, the reason that I've been able to spend the last seven years representing the people of Red Deer-South: my primary and most important supporter, my wife of 34 years, Jackie Dallas. Please rise, Jackie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know the importance of the constituency work that's done in our offices, and I've been incredibly blessed to have one constituency assistant for the last seven years. She has done tireless, fabulous work for the constituents of Red Deer-South. Please welcome Brenda Johnson.

Mr. Speaker, finally and not the least of the three is Brenda's husband, Ken Johnson, who is an entrepreneur in our community, operates a company called Techno Solve, which provides LED lighting solutions, and is one of the best sign men in the business. Welcome, Ken.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I have you down for a second introduction, but I don't see that your guests have arrived yet. Shall we move on?

Ms Blakeman: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have two minutes per statement. Let us begin with Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and then the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Renaye Wade

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Driving is a privilege. Driving requires our full attention at all times. Distracted driving because our attention is diverted somewhere other than the road ahead can be avoided. Sometimes we need more than a gentle reminder to pay attention and avoid what can result in tragic consequences. Sometimes we need people like Renaye Wade to be an advocate to find a way to encourage others to pay attention. A dancer and dance teacher with a dream of becoming a lawyer, Renaye suffered a severe brain injury and was left in a coma for 34 days as a result of a horrific traffic accident. She has had to relearn to eat, drink, sit, stand, and walk.

Over the past two years Renaye and her friends have endeavoured to raise awareness of safe driving practices. To that end, RADD was formed, Renaye Against Distracted Driving. Friends of Renaye have participated in parades. Renaye speaks to young people in school assemblies. I think she has about half a dozen speaking engagements in the next month, and most recently she has created a petition that calls for demerits for distracted driving. One day in Mundare last week I saw Renaye's petition on the counter at the Esso, on the counter at Stawnichy's, and I regularly see her on Facebook.

1:40

As Renaye's mom, Tammy, says: my daughter will never be one hundred per cent because somebody didn't pay attention in a moment; they were distracted, not focusing on the road. Renaye and her family do not want to see others suffer as she has. She is convinced that safer driving must be encouraged by adding demerits to distracted driving violations, and she is here today to support the MLA for Calgary-East and his private member's bill.

Sunday, March 15, marks the second anniversary of the accident that changed Renaye's life forever. You are all invited to the steps of the Legislature to join her as she marks this anniversary and for awareness for stiffer penalties for careless driving. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you and welcome.

Let us move on to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Official Opposition

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three months ago I would have never dreamed of becoming the Leader of the Official Opposition. The outpouring of support from every corner of this province has been overwhelming and has brought me to tears at times. The one message I hear over and over again is, "Keep fighting; we're with you, and let's send a message to all Alberta that

we're roaring back," because – and let me be frank for a moment – Albertans are beginning to see for themselves that this Premier is just the same as the old Premier.

They have watched him break almost every one of the promises he's made. He has been running around the province like Chicken Little, floating trial balloons, threatening tax increases, illegal elections, and has damaged the economic growth in this province. He has talked down to Albertans, blaming them, telling them it's their fault and to look in the mirror, and Albertans are beginning to recognize that the ideas that the Premier has said he has brought forward have come straight from the opposition, whether it's the licence plates, selling the planes, keeping the Michener open, sole-source contracting, or outrageous cellphone bills at AHS.

After 44 years this government is out of ideas. Now, I know that pundits and others have been quick to write us off, but, folks, Albertans love an underdog story. The fact is that the Wildrose believes in democracy. Our values, our principles, and our ideas remain just as important and as badly needed as ever. We're conservatives, and we're not ashamed of it. We believe our health care system should be there for Albertans when they need it, that we have a world-class education system, and we treat all front-line workers in this province with respect. Unlike the Premier, who tried to swallow up the opposition in the dead of the night, we are a party that firmly believes in strengthening democracy, and we are the only party talking about protecting taxpayers from tax increases and stripping government down.

Let me end this with a message. While the actions of a few tried to stop us in our mission, we will never give up, we will never stop fighting, and we will be relentless in our goal to put Albertans first. Thank you to all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Fort McMurray Continuing Care Facility

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question that I'm most asked by the constituents of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is: when are we going to have a long-term care centre for the seniors in Fort McMurray? [interjections] This government has committed to investing in better seniors' care, focusing on long-term care beds, sprinkler and safety upgrades, and seniors' lodges.

As members of this Assembly are well aware, Fort McMurray has been advocating for more than a decade for its first long-term care facility. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm thrilled to say that it's coming soon. The Parsons Creek continuing care has just been retendered after previous bids came in significantly over budget. In order to create the most value, the design of Parsons Creek has been simplified while still maintaining 30 long-term care and 70 affordable supportive living beds. The site also allows for expansion in the future.

Mr. Speaker, those in Fort McMurray can rest assured that we are not about to put vital infrastructure needs aside because of the price of oil and that we're ready to build up. Shovels will be in the ground this construction season on a new, 100-bed continuing care centre. Once open, it will also serve to open up an entire floor of our hospital, enabling the renovation of space for other critical health care delivery for the entire region.

Our government recognizes that Alberta's seniors are a valuable part of our province and need strong programs to support their needs. Ensuring that our seniors are well cared for and well looked after is something that I am deeply committed to. With Parsons Creek continuing care opening, our seniors, those very Albertans that helped convert the oil sands from Canada's largest research and

development project to the engine of its economy, are now entering the sunset of their lives and will be able to spend their remaining years in the community they helped build. They will have familiar, homelike settings that provide an appropriate level of care, close to their families and friends. In addition to the continued twinning of highway 63, six new schools, and interchange work, this is a facility that I am truly proud will finally be constructed in Fort McMurray.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, please be reminded that it is not the custom of this House to interject when members are giving private member's statements or to raise points of order. So thank you for remembering that.

Edmonton-Calder, I understand you're going next, in place of Edmonton-Strathcona. Please proceed.

Government and New Democratic Opposition Policies

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This PC government has squandered our prosperity for far too long. They have neglected education, health care, and infrastructure in the good times and are only making more reckless damage now. They have weakened our most crucial public services and are now asking everyday Albertans to pay the price for mistakes the PCs made again and again and again. This short-sighted, panicked approach for slashing funding to our critical services will only make the problems worse down the road. Alberta has had a critical infrastructure deficit ever since the Klein era.

The PCs have lost sight of what makes this country great: publicly funded health care delivered by well trained front-line workers in modern, functioning hospitals; schools big enough to accommodate our booming student population and enough teachers to guide them through their education; and a variety of transportation infrastructure like safer highways and bridges and expanding public transit.

Alberta's NDP are focused on making things easier for Albertans, Mr. Speaker. While the PCs are out of touch with the needs of this province and are only concerned with priorities of privileged friends and insiders, we are concerned with the priorities of everyone. We are dedicated more than ever to making responsible, balanced choices that will build a more prosperous future for all Albertans. With a diversified economy, a taxation system where the wealthy pay their fair share, and a government that focuses on strengthening families and communities, Alberta's NDP will lead a bright, modern province that all Albertans deserve and need.

Thank you.

The Speaker: We have room for one more. Let's hear from Calgary-Southeast.

Social Work Week

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Social Work Week, which took place last week, March 1 to 7. As a former social worker myself I am honoured to have this opportunity to acknowledge the great work done by my former colleagues and thousands of other social workers throughout the province.

This year's theme was the Art of Cultivating Communities. This is a very appropriate theme as social workers cultivate relationships by working together with schools, contracted agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations. Social workers are often called on to be empathetic, supportive, and patient while dealing with some of the

darkest moments in human life such as addiction, violence, child abuse, and end-of-life support, just to name a few.

As social workers cultivate relationships, they are required to be professional, persistent, and sometimes courageous. They often have to adapt to new situations to help Albertans feel supported and able to make important changes in their lives. Sometimes they are the unsung heroes behind some of the horrific incidents that we encounter. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, social workers are engaged in an incredible profession. They're in the business of changing lives.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Albertans to join our government in thanking those professionals for their exceptional commitment and compassion for serving Albertans. Through their efforts, they contribute to the quality of life of Alberta, making our province one of the best places to live, work, and raise a family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, my script said Calgary-Southeast; with apologies to the hon. member from that area.

Thank you, Calgary-Hawthwood, for your statement.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we begin the clock for Oral Question Period, I would like to advise members of some changes in the rotation to Oral Question Period and to Members' Statements that were necessitated by the changes in caucus membership that occurred in December 2014, while the Assembly was not sitting.

1:50

With respect to the Oral Question Period rotation I would draw your attention to the Oral Question Period rotation document that was placed on your desks yesterday. This rotation is the result of a new House leaders' agreement, which was reached on March 6, 2015, and it replaces the proposed question period rotation that was included in my memo to each of you on March 5, 2015, the memo that went to all members regarding procedures for the continuation, or what we call the procedural letter, for the Third Session of the 28th Legislature. I will table the agreement today at the appropriate time during the daily Routine.

The rotation of questions on day 1 through day 3 for questions 1 through 5 remains the same as it was on December 1, 2014, the last time the Oral Question Period rotation was modified. The Official Opposition retains the first three questions, while the Liberal opposition is entitled to ask the fourth question, and the ND opposition is allotted the fifth question on each of those days.

On day 4 of the rotation the Official Opposition may ask the first two questions, while the Liberal opposition is allocated the third question, and the ND opposition is entitled to ask question 4. The independent member may ask one question in the weekly rotation, and the fifth question on day 4 is reserved for that member.

In addition, the Official Opposition is entitled to ask question 8 on days 2 and 4 along with questions 12 and 14 on days 1 and 3 and question 18 on day 4. The Liberal opposition is allotted questions 6 and 10 each day, question 16 on each day except for day 1, and question 18 on day 2. The ND opposition is also entitled to ask question 8 on days 1 and 3, questions 12 and 14 on days 2 and 4, question 16 on day 1, and question 18 on day 3. The Progressive Conservative caucus is allotted questions 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17 on each day of the rotation and question 18 on day 1. For the benefit of members and those following the ongoing proceedings today is Wednesday, but it is day 4 in terms of the rotation.

On another topic, very briefly, that being members' statements, the members' statement rotation has also been modified to reflect

the current caucus composition of private members in the Assembly. I have not received a House leaders' agreement amending the rotation for members' statements that was included in my March 5, 2015, memo to all members, and therefore that rotation will be followed as outlined. This week is week 1 of the four-week members' statement rotation, and it is otherwise also known as day 17 on the projected sitting days calendar.

Thank you for your indulgence.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Let us move on to Oral Question Period, starting with the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

School Construction

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On school construction the Premier said: we cannot delay any further; we will get shovels in the ground. A few days ago the Infrastructure minister announced that 38 new schools are already under construction. Well, you know what? Sometimes they exaggerate, so we decided to go see if any of these actually have shovels in the ground. In Edmonton not a single one, not even close. In fact, most of them remain empty fields. So I'll ask the Premier again: why did the Infrastructure minister tell Albertans that schools are under construction when they're not?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should be, I think, responsible with her statements to Albertans since schools are important and people care about these. Of the phase 1 schools that were announced in 2011 – there were 35 such schools – 30 of them are now complete. In terms of the phase 2 schools that were announced in 2013, 38 of the 120 schools are under construction. So this is the largest construction of school infrastructure that has taken place in our country. We will get it done on time and on budget, and the hon. member should recognize that.

Mrs. Forsyth: What I do recognize is that the 2011 government is the one that you say you didn't like, didn't want to have anything to do with it.

When most Albertans hear "construction," they expect maybe some shovels, maybe some hammers, some nail guns, but not empty fields. In Edmonton alone there are empty lots at Windermere, Terwillegar Heights, Lewis Estates, Lewis Farms, Summerside, Blackmud Creek, and Bishop David Motiuk, nothing but snow and ice. In Calgary at the Auburn site, nothing but grass. Albertans know what construction looks like, but I'm beginning to wonder if your government knows what it looks like. To the Premier: when are you going to stop playing politics with our . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, we have no intention of playing politics with schools. They are far too important for the children of our province. You'll be pleased to know that this week we are opening two new schools, one in Chestermere and one in Airdrie, and this is a continuation of our commitment from phase 1, phase 2, and phase 3, 230-some projects. They will all be built as the Premier said, on time and on budget. That's our expectation.

Mrs. Forsyth: No, they won't, Minister. Pinocchio.

Let's be clear, Minister. At Lewis Estates we did meet a worker who was unloading some fence. When asked if any of these schools were under construction, he replied: nope. Now your Infrastructure minister has said: schools will be built; they'll be built within the

time frame. Well, guess what? The Edmonton public school board themselves are saying that we'd be lucky to have any schools ready for 2017. The fact is that this is nothing more than PC electioneering and empty promises. To the minister: why is your government misleading Albertans on how many schools have shovels at them?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times we have to tell the member opposite the statistics, that are very clear. In phase 1: 35 school projects with 30 of them completed, four under construction. In phase 2: 120 projects with a number of them in design, a number in tender, a number in construction. In phase 3: 57 projects. Our target is to open schools in '16 and in '17 and five high schools in 2018. I can't think of a better scenario for the children in our province.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second main set of questions, hon. leader.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Minister, you and I are going to go for a drive.

Health Care Funding

Mrs. Forsyth: This morning the government announced that it's taking action on health care for Albertans. Interesting timing. Emergency rooms in Edmonton and Calgary will be renovated at a cost of \$50 million over two years, but here's the catch. Apparently, it's all depending on detailed planning. Now, this sounds oddly familiar to the government's school strategy. Make an announcement, put up a sign, and walk away. Minister, Albertans are tired of empty pre-election promises. If you haven't done the detailed planning, how can you possibly announce that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're moving ahead as quickly as possible on these plans. You can fast-track with creative people, get things done in a very expeditious way. We plan to move through our redevelopment of our emergency rooms because they're needed, and it will be done in a reasonable length of time because this government wants to see projects move ahead quickly.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Minister, whatever you do, don't get the Infrastructure minister because he doesn't move very fast.

Minister, you claim to be taking action, yet the transition beds you announced today won't even be built till next fall. We've seen how this government's promise evolves over the span of just one week, let alone half a year. Albertans aren't buying it. Last week an entire surgical ward was closed at the Peter Lougheed and nurses were laid off. The spin of this, of course, was that the beds were being converted into transition units for seniors. Good news. But if you're waiting for surgery, well, I guess that's too bad. Where are the 36 surgical beds going to be?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to maintaining their promises. Last fall we committed to 750 new long-term care beds, of which 466 would be available this year, and we will have 303. As to the surgical beds Peter Lougheed is in a position to deliver those services, but they're using some of the facilities for restorative care, which is a really important part of making sure our citizens are taken care of.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, we didn't get where the surgical beds are, so let's try this. It seems like only a few weeks ago the Premier stood up and pronounced to Albertans that there was no more money.

Zero. Nothing. Zilch. Now it seems, on the eve of an election, that the government does have money: money for schools, money for hospitals, money for seniors' beds, money for anything and everything that Albertans need. Now, we've seen this game before. You promise the world, you call an election, and then you break your promise. Premier, one minute there's no money; the next minute, there's millions. Where's the money to pay for these pre-election promises? Show us the money, Premier.

2:00

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the hon. member to stay tuned, and she will in due course see a fiscal plan and a budget and a financial plan that takes this province forward. We've been very clear, both the Minister of Finance and myself, that we will firstly maintain the quality of front-line services to Albertans because that is what Albertans want. We've also been very clear that we intend to get caught up and continue to build the social capital that we need in this province. That is what Albertans have expected from this government, and that's what we will deliver.

The Speaker: We're moving on to Calgary-Mountain View for your questions.

Childhood Immunization

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier and the Education minister helped Alberta take a progressive step forward by finally agreeing to an idea which seemed radical to them at the time but proved to be the right thing to do. I want to give them the same opportunity today. For years public health officials have been telling us that school vaccinations are the best way to protect Martha and Henry's grandchildren, make them healthy, and ensure that our communities are protected against preventable disease. Will the Premier show the same leadership today as he did yesterday and make vaccines mandatory in all schools in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Dirks: Thank you, member opposite and Mr. Speaker. This is an issue that is of concern to Canadians. We have seen the importance of vaccinations over the generations. I have experienced that personally, as I'm sure all members have. We would want to ensure that children are vaccinated; I think that's very important. We would want to have consultations with people across the province if we were going to consider the proposal that the member opposite is bringing forward today.

The Speaker: First supplemental, hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Public Health Agency of Canada also strongly recommends that children be vaccinated as it not only protects the individual; it protects all the people in their circle. Vaccines save lives. All 50 U.S. states and three Canadian provinces require proof of vaccination or an exemption for enrolment in school. Clearly, other jurisdictions are being progressive on the issue, but Alberta is still lagging far behind. We can change that today. Will the Minister of Education commit to making Martha and Henry's grandkids safer by requiring proof of immunization when a child is registered for school? Yes or no?

Mr. Dirks: I thank the member opposite for the question. Vaccinations do save lives, and they are very important for our children and for our grandchildren, so we want to ensure that children are vaccinated. I take very seriously the member's proposal. We would want to, as I said, consult with school boards,

with parents, with Albertans to see what might be the way forward on this particular matter.

The Speaker: Final supplemental, please.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, only about 72 per cent of children by their second birthday have received the appropriate vaccinations. Alberta Health Services' own goal is 98 per cent. It's understood that not everyone can get vaccines due to medical and other conditions, so bona fide exemptions are understood and accepted. Again, this time to the Minister of Health: given that this would clearly help your department achieve its benchmarks, which we all know has been a major challenge, will you implement mandatory vaccinations for school attendance?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We concur with the Minister of Education. We'd be glad to work with all the institutions to try to find ways to ensure that all our children are vaccinated. It's important. But there are rules and regulations that we must follow and parental positions we must listen to.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, leader of the ND opposition, followed by the independent member.

Health Care Funding (continued)

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last weeks I've released documents showing a crisis in Alberta's emergency rooms. On one day in September every emergency room in Calgary was so packed that critically ill patients arriving at emergency room doors were not receiving life-saving care in the way Canadian standards demand. Meanwhile this government is telling Albertans to expect a 9 per cent cut to services. To the Premier: why won't you at least admit that your plan to cut 9 per cent out of health care will make the problems deeply, deeply more difficult?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, I think it's vitally important to understand that this government is committed to making sure that front-line service is delivered in a most expeditious way. Our emergency departments in the two major cities have had some challenges. But you know something? We have some incredible people working there, who are working through the challenge they face. As you know, this year has been a big problem with the flu season. I believe it's over now. It should take some pressure off the system, which will allow it to be more efficient. Today we announced some changes, and we can talk about those after.

The Speaker: First supplemental, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was at that announcement, but I will say that renaming existing hospital beds isn't actually opening new beds. As for the \$50 million that the Health minister announced today, it kind of pales next to the 9 per cent cut. Indeed, a 5 per cent cut to AHS is almost a billion dollars, 20 times more than what you announced today. So if the Premier thinks that his announcement of \$50 million today can help the front line, exactly how does he expect Albertans to believe that a cut 20 times that size will not hurt the front line?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, the intent of this government is to run an efficient, effective government. Our health care system is one of the best in the country. There are ways in which we can do things

more efficiently, more effectively. There are metrics at which we can do more and be more efficient. The \$50 million today is going to open up opportunities in several emergency rooms to begin to expand their ability to deliver services to Albertans as well as to encourage more mental health capacity for the systems. This government is committed to helping every single individual who needs emergency help.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, five years ago this PC government had another celebratory press conference, where they announced that by 2015 they would ensure that 90 per cent of ER patients are admitted within eight hours. Well, the facts tell a different story. Last week the average number of patients in Calgary and Edmonton ERs admitted within eight hours was 34 per cent. Not 90 per cent; 34 per cent. So five years and you're at one-third of your target. Again, to the Premier: why should Albertans trust your government to manage health care at all, let alone trust you to cut 9 per cent without . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, today's announcement of \$50 million will go a long way in helping to improve that. The Premier's announcement in the fall – we're beginning to build more long-term care beds, of which we announced 750; 466 in the short term. We have improved and have put over 300 people in those long-term care beds. As I said earlier, the Minister of Seniors is going to announce tomorrow the ASLI program. We're making tremendous strides in trying to move forward, making sure that Albertans can move through our emergency system but also through our acute-care system.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Changes in Caucus Affiliations

Mr. Anglin: Last December the leader and House leader of the Queen's loyal opposition organized the greatest betrayal of the public trust in parliamentary history. They made use of their positions to influence or otherwise coerce members of their own caucus in a treacherous mutilation of an effective, elected opposition. To the Premier: when you first learned of the proposed offer to merge with the Wildrose Party and the now reconstituted offer to cross the floor en masse, did you at any time advise, consult, or otherwise inform anyone that this was or could be unethical?

Mr. Prentice: Well, there's a collection of language there that, if not unparliamentary, is certainly incendiary, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that I'm proud of the Progressive Conservative caucus. I'm proud of the people who comprise that caucus. They are, without exception, decent, honourable people who come to work every day trying to do the right thing by Albertans, and I'm proud to call them my colleagues.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. independent member, let's watch our language a little bit here if we could, please. Let's hear what you have for your first supplemental.

Mr. Anglin: I didn't see a point of order, Mr. Speaker, but I'll be cognizant of that.

Before or during negotiations that effectuated the single most treasonous act in parliamentary history, did anyone known to you entertain, discuss, consider, or otherwise debate any offers or

requests for cabinet appointments for these corrupt members proposing to cross the floor?

Speaker's Ruling Intemperate Language

The Speaker: Hon. member, I fail to see how that elevates the level of decorum or debate in this House. Personal attacks are not in question here, please, and they're not in order either. I don't need a point of order to rise and ask someone to retract or refrain or restrain. I'm going to ask if anybody over here wants to offer a comment to that question. If they don't, we'll move on to your final supplemental, which I hope you'll glance at quickly and clean up, if nothing else.

Anybody wishing to respond?

I see no one wishing to respond, so let's hear what you have for your final supplemental.

2:10

Mr. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, I think the public deserves an answer to that question.

To the Minister of Justice: as a member of the cabinet and as a member of the Alberta bar, upon learning of the proposed floor crossing under discussion here, did you at any time advise, consult, or otherwise inform anyone that what was being proposed was or could be unethical?

Mr. Denis: I believe this member is asking for a legal opinion, which I'm not privy to.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Let us move on. Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Riverview.

Sexual Health Education Curriculum Content

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Education and I helped the province take a very progressive step forward, and today I'd like to encourage him to come hand in hand with me and take another very progressive step forward by mandating the teaching of consent to young people as part of the school curriculum. Now, consent is fundamental in educating young people on the importance of individual rights, reinforcing gender equality, and reducing sexual violence, especially amongst females. To the Education minister: will he follow best practices and commit to putting the teaching of consent into the sex ed curriculum?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, we certainly want students to learn about healthy lifestyles, relationships, and wellness. Teachers already have the flexibility to discuss topics related to sexual health, including sexual consent, and we encourage them to tailor class discussions and projects to current issues and to student interests. Human sexuality education is currently offered in grades 4 through 9 in the mandatory health and lifestyles program. We're presently engaged in a curriculum review, and we welcome all school boards, parents, and other education stakeholders to share their perspective on the matter of sexual consent.

The Speaker: Thank you.

First supplemental.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much. I know that the curriculum is certainly about healthy and respectful relationships, but does the minister really think that being taught healthy and respectful

relationships is going to empower kids to know their rights and to keep predators away? This is really important.

Mr. Dirks: Well, I'm sure the member opposite would agree that healthy lifestyles, relationships, and wellness include understanding issues pertaining to sexuality, and that's why we have some of those elements in our curriculum. As I indicated, we are presently engaged in a broad review of our curriculum, and we welcome all school boards, parents, and other education stakeholders to share their perspectives on the matter of sexual consent.

Ms Blakeman: Well, thanks, but it doesn't teach consent. Date rape for high school and university students is way too common, and it happens because kids find themselves out of their comfort zone and not able to deal with the situation. So why can't the government help these kids by allowing consent to be taught as part of sex education?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll simply reiterate what I said, that we are in a curriculum review. It's a broad curriculum review of all aspects of Alberta's curriculum, kindergarten through grade 12, and we welcome school boards and parents and other stakeholders and the member opposite, if she'd like to get involved, to share their perspective on the issue of sexual consent during this curriculum review.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Postsecondary Education Access

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a world-class education system and universities. However, many of my constituents are concerned that access to advanced education is making it difficult for students to enrol in programs they are qualified for, particularly engineering, science, and medicine. Alberta already has the lowest involvement in postsecondary institutions in the country, and they fear that additional barriers may impact this further. My question is to the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education. What is the minister doing to accommodate Alberta's students that fully meet the entry requirements . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you very much. I would like to begin by saying thank you to this member for being such a strong advocate for Alberta's postsecondary students. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to a system that is achieving accessibility, excellence, and sustainability. Accessibility will be a key part of our postbudget discussions that I'll be having with all of our Campus Alberta partners. In spite of the enrolment challenges, nearly 9 out of every 10 qualified students receive an offer of admission following their applications. We also have a number of delivery options for those who don't receive their first choice.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Young: Given the funding that Alberta taxpayers contribute to universities, our Alberta students may not receive priority for program spots. What is the minister doing to serve these Alberta students before out-of-province and out-of-country learners?

Mr. Scott: Again, Mr. Speaker, Campus Alberta institutions are responsible for setting their individual entrance requirements.

Accessibility for Albertans will be a key part of our postbudget consultation across Campus Alberta. Accessibility for Albertans is important. We also need to keep attracting the best young minds from across the world to Campus Alberta. Let me tell you why they apply to Campus Alberta. In a recent ranking of 2,000 elite universities the University of Alberta ranked 84. Amongst universities younger than 50 years old the University of Calgary ranked 13th in the world and number 1 in Canada.

Mr. Young: Given Alberta's low participation rate why aren't there more grants, student loans, and bursaries available for students who wish to attend postsecondary institutions in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you. Accessibility is a priority for this government, and I'm proud of our record. We invest \$234 million in student aid supports. That includes scholarships, bursaries, grants, and debt management programs. In addition, \$408 million is available through student loans. Any Albertan who's eligible for a loan receives one. Our graduates are successful, and they're successful paying their loans back. We expect that 90 per cent of our student loan dollars issued this year will be paid back, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Stony Plain.

Michael Stanley

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you. In 2013 I asked the Minister of Justice why he did not work harder to put convicted rapist Michael Stanley behind bars. I said that he was at a high risk to reoffend and that we had a moral obligation to put him in prison to keep others safe. The Justice minister disagreed and let Stanley roam free to hunt for his next victim, and recently he found her. Stanley raped a 69-year-old lady in Seattle. Does the Justice minister still think it was the right decision to let this piece of scum roam free?

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit confused. Does this member want me to spend taxpayers' dollars to bring a convicted sex offender back to Alberta? As far as I'm concerned, this man is outside of Alberta, and he can stay out.

Mr. Saskiw: According to the King county sheriff's office Stanley is being held on \$1 million bail. At least somebody is doing the minister's job for him. Imagine that: keeping a criminal behind bars. In fact, despite acknowledging Stanley's violent record, the minister's department said that the charges he was facing, and I quote, do not typically warrant engaging the extradition process. Minister, he broke our laws. There should be consequences. Why did you let him go free?

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, there were no outstanding charges against this individual in Alberta for any violent offences. I say again that this man is out of Alberta as a convicted sex offender, and he can stay out.

Mr. Saskiw: Apparently it's okay if the person gets raped outside of our country.

Given that it has been reported that Stanley has been in and out of jail since the minister let him free, including an arrest where he had to be subdued with a taser in a nursing home, and now he's being charged with raping a 69-year-old lady, does the minister still think it was the right decision to let him roam freely, or will he

commit today to our suggestion to alter Alberta's extradition policy immediately so this won't happen again?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, it has just come to my attention that this matter still might be under sub judice elsewhere.

Mr. Denis: This is before the courts in the United States.

The Speaker: Thank you. Well, then let's have that clarified and move on. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Saskiw: Point of clarification.

Corporate Taxation

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the past few weeks I've met with groups and individuals in my constituency of Stony Plain. They have provided me with valuable feedback regarding what they believe should be included in Budget 2015. Some of the many topics we've covered include arguments for and against the reintroduction of health care premiums; the pros and cons of introducing a sales tax, a progressive tax, et cetera; and raising corporate taxes. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Corporations have benefited tremendously from Alberta's resource-rich economy for decades. If we are all in this together, why are we not looking at raising corporate taxes?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the hon. member, I've also been out listening to Albertans about our upcoming budget. The members know I can't talk about Budget 2015, but I think it's important to consider that given low oil prices, the slowing economy with slim to no margins, laying off employees, now is not a good time to raise corporate taxes. I also look at the forest industry that's now getting back on its feet. I look at the agricultural industry that's competing world-wide. Raising corporate taxes is not what we need right now. What we need to do is keep Albertans working and protect jobs. Raising corporate taxes would make Alberta a less attractive place to invest and would reduce our competitive advantage and discourage companies from investing . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Let's hear the first supplemental now, please.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are facing a massive \$7 billion revenue gap in this year's budget, is there a strategy in place that would involve all Albertans, including corporations, helping to fill the budget gap while at the same time keeping Alberta competitive?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, both the Premier and I have said all along that as Albertans we're all in this together. Corporations are entities large and small made up of people who live and work, raise families, and pay taxes in Alberta. They donate to many social and sports organizations in our communities.

We live in a global economy, and capital is increasingly mobile. Investors prefer to put their money in places where their returns are taxed at lower rates. I would prefer they continue to invest in Alberta instead of other jurisdictions. We must remain competitive on the national and international playing fields.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how about raising corporate taxes in specific industries or sectors that have benefited the most from our low-tax system?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's well known that all Albertans benefit from our tax system. Currently if Alberta had a tax system like any other province, Albertans and Alberta businesses would pay at least \$11.6 billion more in taxes, something that the AFL suggests we might do. I don't believe that now is the time to raise corporate tax. We need to keep Albertans working and maintain our competitive advantage during this economic slowdown.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to stay tuned for Budget 2015 and to support this government as we deliver a 10-year plan to get us off the roller coaster of oil prices.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, you raised a point of clarification at 2:20 regarding the Minister of Justice's comment about this matter being sub judice, and we will hear about that later. I'll be happy to clarify whatever the question is. I'm sure you know what sub judice is, but I'll hear you anyway.

Let us move on to Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Little Bow.

Health Facility Funding

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, during the last health care crisis this government announced 360 new beds to help relieve pressure on ER departments, but a few years later the transition unit at the Royal Alex was closed even as the wait times worsened. Today the Minister of Health announced the creation of another 300 beds in hospitals. Every crisis, every election the PCs promise more beds just to take them away afterwards. This is another expensive political Band-Aid. To the Minister of Health: why should Albertans trust that this will be any different given your government's pattern of broken promises?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we did not promise 300-plus beds in hospitals; we promised 300 beds in a new kind of setting, which will allow people to move more rapidly through recuperation.

Ms Blakeman: So where is it? In the parking lot?

Mr. Mandel: It's under the new ASLI program.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, through the chair, please.

Mr. Mandel: Sorry.

The Speaker: No need to take the bait. Let's carry on with the answer.

Mr. Mandel: She's cute.

So we've continued to meet our promises. We did it in the fall. We're doing it now.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, of course, the real problem here is that we're trying to get people out of these institutions and into the community. When will this government build the needed public

long-term care beds and supportive home-care services so they're not getting into the hospitals and ERs?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're doing. We're building facilities and having people move into these facilities so that they don't have to go into hospitals or, if they are in hospitals, they can recuperate quicker in the proper environment. These are long-term care facilities, and they will make sure that people move quicker through the system so they can be allowed to go home quicker or go into the proper care system.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Swann: This looks like more money for their private friends and donors. Will he guarantee that the ASLI grants will not go to private, for-profit care providers but will remain in the public system?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I take exception to that comment. I want to be clear that the announcement of this minister today is about restorative care for senior citizens. That should be of concern to every single person in this Legislative Assembly. These are restorative beds that will make sure that senior citizens who are ill are in the exact perfect circumstances they should be in and not in an acute-care bed in a hospital. It's compassionate, it means a lot to seniors in this province, and the opposition should support it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Rural Bridge Maintenance and Repair

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Transportation. Back in Budget '13-14 Alberta Transportation zero funded the strategic transportation infrastructure program, which contains local bridge file funds. Alberta rural municipalities demand access to the fund's engineering support and help in the repair and rehabilitation of these bridges in order to ensure the shortest, most direct routes for our products to market. What assurances can this minister provide rural municipalities that dead ends and long detours will not become the norm because the range and township roads are becoming unsafe?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for his questions and for always being such as a strong advocate for rural Alberta. First, I'd like to assure this House and all Albertans that there are no unsafe bridges in this province. My department monitors the conditions closely, and we take appropriate action when necessary if deficiencies are found.

Second, while it has been disappointing to see the STIP program zero funded these last few years, rural municipalities do receive significant provincial funding to address local priorities.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Donovan: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that rural municipalities already receive millions of dollars through MSI funding grants and they can set their own infrastructure priorities, should the government in Alberta be picking winners and losers when it comes to handing out funds for the local road bridge funding program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The local road bridge program is about helping rural municipalities keep up with the maintenance of bridges that don't fall under provincial jurisdiction. The funds are distributed fairly based on the number and condition of local bridges in a given municipality. Again, it has been disappointing to see STIP zero funded in recent years, but the hon. member is right when he points out that municipalities do receive infrastructure funding through the MSI program, the basic municipal transportation grant, and the gas tax fund.

Mr. Donovan: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: does Alberta Transportation have civil engineers able to provide in-kind assistance to municipalities for their bridge projects, or do municipalities have to waste their precious money on grant dollars to give out to engineering services?

Mr. Drysdale: In fact, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Transportation does provide technical advice for our regional bridge staff to municipalities when asked. While delivery of most bridge projects does require site-specific engineering designs, we do provide the appropriate guidelines and standards developed in partnership with AAMD and C. In most cases municipalities as well as Alberta Transportation have been using engineering consultants to assist in delivering bridge projects for the last 20 years.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Calgary-Hawkwood.

Support for Postsecondary Students

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to ignore that student debt in this province is at record levels and that Alberta's tuition fees are amongst the highest in the country. This week the minister of advanced education announced that postsecondary students will now be able to pay off their loans using Aeroplan points. This is ridiculous. It would take almost 4 million points to pay off the average student debt. Will the advanced education minister agree to take real action to reduce the financial burdens of postsecondary education on students and their families, or will he continue to offer silly and ineffectual solutions that do nothing?

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, let me put some facts on the table about how this government supports our postsecondary students. Alberta universities obtain almost 58 per cent of their operating revenue from government funding. This is 5 per cent higher than the national average and 16 per cent higher than Ontario. Tuition from Alberta university students accounts for a lower proportion of operating revenues, 30 per cent, than other provinces such as Ontario, where it's 50 per cent, and British Columbia, where it's 41 per cent. Alberta invests in our students. Our latest numbers show that Alberta has the third-highest expenditures for full-time students in Canada.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that Alberta has the lowest postsecondary participation rate in the entire country and given that this government appears to want to do nothing to reduce actual costs to students but everything to increase the ways that they can pay, to the minister of advanced education: what is your government's next big plan to increase participation in our postsecondary system? Will it be gift cards from Holt Renfrew?

2:30

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, I'm uncertain why that member would criticize giving students an additional way to pay off their student loans. You know, we want to give innovative ways to pay student debt. That's exactly what we're doing. I spoke earlier about the steps we're taking to make postsecondary education more accessible. We're going to continue that work. Nine out of 10 students who apply to postsecondary institutions get an offer of admission. The record speaks for itself.

Mr. Mason: Well, maybe the minister can get a deal with Tim Hortons.

Given that few students that I know have thousands of Aeroplan points, certainly not those from families of modest means, and given that while some might be inclined to think this announcement is a joke, for those students unable to achieve their dreams, it's not funny at all, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister please knock off the goofy announcements and get serious about making postsecondary education affordable for all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Scott: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Alberta ranks second in terms of providing student loans to cover basic education and living costs. Any student who's eligible for a student loan receives it. We expect this year that of the student loans we issue, 90 per cent of those student loans are going to be repaid. In 2013 and 2014 approximately 60,000 students received \$775 million in federal and provincial loans and grants through Student Aid Alberta. Alberta students also benefit from scholarships and awards. We provided approximately \$72.5 million in 2013-2014 to over 37,000 students.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Let us move on to the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Apprenticeship Training

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The piping industry training program, or PIT, is an excellent training facility to provide training and upgrading to apprenticeships and journeypersons throughout our province. I had the honour of visiting this facility last winter and was particularly impressed by two programs. One is targeting high-risk dropout school kids, and the other is for aboriginals. Those both are vulnerable populations, as we can appreciate. My question is to the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education. Given the current fiscal climate many Albertans...

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. A number of our Campus Alberta postsecondary institutions are actively involved in preapprenticeship training, providing knowledge and skills to individuals interested in pursuing a career in the trades. In addition, I'm very pleased to say that Innovation and Advanced Education supports several organizations such as Women Building Futures and Careers: the Next Generation, that actively work to increase awareness and prepare Albertans to enter into the trades. My department continues to investigate options where we can increase support for programs and partners that help Albertans begin a career in the trades.

Mr. Luan: To the same minister: given that Trade Winds to Success is a program helping aboriginal folks, as you mentioned, has your ministry provided any financial support to this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Scott: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Trade Winds to Success is definitely a valuable program, supporting aboriginal Albertans in pursuing a career in the trades. Human Services has provided funding to Trade Winds, and the breakdown is as follows: in 2011-12 it's \$231,303; in 2012-2013 \$492,525; in 2013-2014 \$626,462; in the last year \$246,183. We're continuing to work with Aboriginal Relations, Human Services, and Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour to explore funding options.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Luan: To the hon. Minister of Education: given that the program partners with CBE and has helped at-risk youth, is your ministry in any way or shape supporting this program?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, we're committed to providing our youth in Alberta with every opportunity to succeed in our job market and to gain experience, valuable hands-on learning. It's important. Our provincial dual credit strategy enables students to earn credit for both high school and postsecondary at the same time so they can explore their passions and career options. Of course, we have the registered apprentice program as well, which is very successful in helping them work towards a high school diploma. We encourage our school boards to continue with postsecondary and business and industry partners to provide our Alberta students with great learning opportunities through these initiatives.

School Construction

(continued)

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Infrastructure how many school construction projects the PC government had misled Albertans about, to which he did not provide an answer. Today we've learned of empty, snow-covered fields where, the government told us, construction was already under way. I guess I'll have to direct my question to the Minister of Education. When will you come clean and give accurate information about the status of these new schools?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times my colleague or I have to stand in the House and provide the accurate information, which we already did again today: 230 school projects, creating about 78,000 new student spaces. We are moving forward on the tranche 1 and 2 and 3 projects. We're opening a couple of schools this week. Schools are being built, or they are in design phase or in permitting phase. The earthmovers are moving, the shovels are going in the ground, and the member opposite will see that these schools will be built on time and on budget.

The Speaker: Thank you.

First supplemental.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pounding a sign in the ground does not count as under construction.

Given that the update the Minister of Infrastructure gave Albertans on Monday stated that 115 new schools will be opened by the fall of 2016 and given that school boards are telling us there is no chance many of these new schools will be open by the fall of 2016, how can you possibly tell Alberta families that you're going to open these schools on time?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is look at the projects that we are working on right now and see that we are making considerable progress on those towards our deadlines, and the fact that we're opening two new schools later this week is a prime example of our commitment to meet our guidelines and meet our goals and meet our commitment to the children of Alberta.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta needed new schools years ago and given that students have had to learn in makeshift classrooms or ride the bus for hours each day to get to school and given that parents and families are tired of waiting, to the Minister of Education: do you actually think that misrepresenting the progress on new schools is going to hide your incompetence for very long?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, last week I was in Lac La Biche, and we opened a new school. Previously I have been in Airdrie, and we opened a new school. We're opening a new school in Chestermere later and in Airdrie within the next week. These are indications of: promise made, promise kept. We're committed on 232 school projects for the children of Alberta. That is visionary leadership.

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

Temporary Foreign Worker Health Coverage

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maria Venancio is a temporary foreign worker. She came to work at McDonald's and, while going to work, got hit by a car and was rendered quadriplegic. Now she is being deported, and she has no health care coverage at all. To the Minister of Health: why won't Alberta Health provide Maria with health care coverage so that she can get her badly needed medical treatment while awaiting her immigration procedures?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My heart goes out to the individual. It's very sad when situations like this occur. While I cannot speak about the specifics of this particular case, I can tell you that Alberta Health Services will provide emergency care to anyone who is in the province of Alberta, even an individual that does not have an Alberta health care insurance plan. But, like all provinces across the country, we don't do that if you're not a resident. So we need to look to another order of government – maybe it's the federal government – to do the kinds of things they need to do to put proper insurance in for these foreign workers.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the difficult position the minister is in. However, will he then raise this issue with his federal counterparts in Health and Citizenship and Immigration, knowing that Maria is not the only person who doesn't require emergency care but simply needs ongoing medical care while she is awaiting her deportation procedures?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I will do all I can to ensure that this individual gets adequate health care within the province of Alberta with the support of the federal government.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you. To the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. Mr. Speaker, again, this minister's hands are somewhat tied, but will he raise this issue with his counterparts in Citizenship and Immigration, making sure that this doesn't happen to anybody else, as in this case McDonald's Canada did not provide Maria with her short-term and long-term disability insurance as they should have according to the labour market opinion?

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

2:40

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member talks about a case where I think we all feel compassion for the individual. As he rightly points out, this is a federal program. There's a compassionate-care clause within the federal government, as the hon. member says. I'll be happy to connect with him and try to connect the individual with that compassionate-care clause, and we can also talk to the federal government to see if there are improvements that we can make to their program.

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

Energy Industry Environmental Issues

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. We're all hearing about pipeline spills and leaks and the danger to the environment from that. I'm really curious because between 1996 and 2012 over 9,000 environmental incidents occurred, with over 4,000 of them in clear violation of regs and directives. For example, with CNRL's Primrose, the public still doesn't know how this leak began, if it has stopped, and how much bitumen has leaked. To the minister of the environment: why does this ministry have such a bad record on identifying environmental violations and in ensuring compliance?

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. As part of our integrated resource management system, that this government has put in place, we take environmental performance very seriously. While one incident is one too many, Albertans expect that the development of our resources is done in a responsible manner. We have the Alberta Energy Regulator in place, that is informed of any of these incidents and performs an investigation to understand why these incidents have happened and what the appropriate action is to take place. What is important is that with any of these incidents, the companies are responsible for the cleanup.

Ms Blakeman: Now, Mr. Minister, the AER's investigations are very limited.

Back to the same minister: how can the minister defend any record when industrial self-reporting has failed so spectacularly on openness and transparency, with 4,000 examples of environmental violation?

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, as I reiterated, we need to make sure that our resources are developed in a responsible manner. Albertans expect, when we develop our resources, that the environment is top of mind in how we do that, and certainly our customers expect that as it relates to products that we sell outside of Alberta. What is important is that we have a regulatory system in place, that when these incidents occur, we have an independent, arm's-length body that goes in and does the investigation to determine exactly what is the cause of those incidents.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Back to the same minister, then: given that there is an entire program to compensate farmers for cows that have been killed by predators like grizzlies or wolves, what is the compensation program to Albertans when muskeg or wetlands are ruined and the entire ecosystem dies, as recently happened at the Murphy Oil site? How do we get compensated?

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to reiterate that we care deeply about the environment and any incident that takes place. We have appropriate rules and regulations, some of the strictest in the world, when it comes to these sorts of things. As I said in my first comment, any environmental damage that is caused by these incidents is the responsibility of the producer to make sure that it is cleaned up and remediated back to its original condition. It is a polluter-pays model, and those regulations are in place.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. The time for question period has concluded.

In 30 seconds from now we'll continue with Members' Statements, and we'll hear from Edmonton-Riverview.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

University of Alberta Research Chairs

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely proud to rise today to speak about the research chairs at the University of Alberta. These chairs are not about a place to sit down; in fact, these chair holders are driving leading-edge research, and they're not doing it alone. Each of these chairs results in many postdoctorate researchers, graduate students who are advancing innovation and their own expertise. The University of Alberta, through partnership with the National Research Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, in partnerships with the government of Alberta's Alberta Innovates – Bio, Health Solutions, Technology Futures, and Energy and Environment Solutions – along with industry associations and individual businesses, has been able to pursue exceptional research, development, and commercialization. The patents, spinoffs, business, and innovation that's implemented are impressive to say the least.

The partnership that supports these industrial research chairs attracts and retains the best minds and the world's brightest talent at the University of Alberta. These funding agreements for these chair positions certainly can be onerous, and they address issues of governance, finances, intellectual property. But the value of the co-operation in bringing together academics, research, innovation, and industry continues to produce impressive results. The University of Alberta has been allocated an impressive number of these chairs, each pursuing excellence in numerous highly competitive fields, including engineering, natural sciences, health sciences, humanities, and the social sciences. With these expert teams of researchers and the leading-edge innovation the University of Alberta students also benefit from the interaction of innovation, research, commercialization, and the development of the next generation of innovators.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Clerk: Notices of Motions.

The Speaker: Just before we go to Notices of Motions, I've had a request to revert to Introduction of Guests briefly. Does anybody object to giving consent to do that? If you do, please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce two young people who have joined us this afternoon. We always encourage people to come over to the House of the people here at the Assembly, so Dan Rose and Andrea Urbina, friends of many here in this Assembly, are here. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, you had a notice of motion that you wish to give.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice that at the appropriate time I'll be rising on a point of privilege concerning the fact that I believe that my ability to participate as a member of the independent Standing Committee on Legislative Offices was breached, the work of the committee was obstructed by actions which reversed a decision already made by the committee, and that a contempt of privilege has taken place.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 12

Common Business Number Act

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

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce Bill 12, the Common Business Number Act.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Albertans have a business-friendly environment through initiatives that reduce red tape and improve services for businesses. This bill is new legislation that will authorize Alberta to enter into a partnership with the Canada Revenue Agency to adopt a common business number identification system. The common business number is based on a one-business, one-number vision where businesses are provided with a single unique identifier that they use when dealing with any participating federal or provincial government programs.

Adopting the common business number in Alberta will enable our province to improve service delivery and simplify how businesses interact with participating provincial government programs. This will allow businesses to easily and accurately identify themselves using this common identifier already issued by the Canada Revenue Agency. Implementing this bill will position our government to modernize services, enhance the province's business environment, and support Alberta businesses to operate on a level playing field with businesses elsewhere in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move pursuant to Standing Order 75 that Bill 12, the Common Business Number Act, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

2:50

Bill 13 Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2015

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and request leave to introduce Bill 13, the Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2015.

Alberta's waterways are in danger of imminent zebra and quagga mussel infestation, and it's imperative that our legislation reflect the seriousness of this threat. Bill 13's proposed amendments include mandatory boat inspection on major highways in the province; adding a controlled invasive-species list, including aqua-invasive species of concern; enhancing the authority of the law enforcement to ensure compliance with aquatic invasive-species prevention measures. These amendments will help protect Alberta's vulnerability to mussel infestation, which would have severe and far-reaching economic impacts across our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move pursuant to Standing Order 75 that Bill 13, Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2015, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 14 Agricultural Societies Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to request leave to introduce Bill 14, the Agricultural Societies Amendment Act, 2015.

The proposed amendments will serve to modernize existing legislation and ensure that it is well aligned with the Societies Act. The amendments will also ensure that all agricultural societies have effective bylaws in place to maintain good governance while recognizing that large and small agricultural societies need to have flexibility in how they are structured to meet their individual needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Bill 15 Securities Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and introduce Bill 15, the Securities Amendment Act, 2015.

The proposed amendments will further modernize, harmonize, and streamline Alberta's security laws and relate to four topic areas: enforcement-related amendments, point-of-sale related amendments, amendments that support the continued harmonization of derivatives regulation, and housekeeping amendments of a technical nature. Ongoing review and regular amendments to Alberta's Securities Act are required to keep pace with industry developments and to support the ongoing reform of the Canadian regulatory system. The proposed amendments will ensure that Alberta honours its commitment under the 2004 memorandum of understanding to ongoing reform and to satisfy our international commitments in the ongoing harmonization of security laws and regulations across Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Bill 16 Statutes Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce for first reading Bill 16, Statutes Amendment Act, 2015, on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's legal system continues to evolve, and it's imperative that our laws are kept up to date. Bill 16 provides amendments to several acts to ensure that Alberta provincial legislation is clear and consistent. A number of amendments will also be approved to access justice and enhance services for Albertans. The bill includes amendments to a total of six acts: the Provincial Court Act; the Court of Queen's Bench Act; the Police Act; the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation Act; Land Titles Act; and Post-secondary Learning Act.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments follow the consultation with a number of stakeholder groups, including the judiciary, Alberta legal communities, and members of the public. These stakeholders support these changes.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move pursuant to Standing Order 75 that Bill 16, Statutes Amendment Act, 2015, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, I'm watching the clock as well. Let me recognize you.

Mr. Denis: Yes. I do have a couple of tablings, but I first would like to request unanimous consent of this Assembly that we continue with the Routine past 3 o'clock notwithstanding rule 7(7).

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Members, you've heard the motion. We have just a few items of business to tidy up. Unanimous consent has been asked for. If anyone objects to giving unanimous consent, please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Let me hear from the Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have two tablings here. I first would like to table the appropriate number of copies of the Law Enforcement Review Board's annual report for 2015. The Law Enforcement Review Board is an independent body that is an appeal body for public complaints concerning police conduct. It also hears appeals from police officers who have been the subject of discipline arising from a complaint and peace officers who have had their appointments cancelled.

Secondly, I also have five copies of the Chair-Initiated Complaint and Public Interest Investigation into the RCMP's Response to the 2013 Flood in High River, Alberta, which I have read with interest.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of tablings today. The first one, that I am just so pleased and proud to table, is a document called *We Are Listening: Sparking Public Conversation on GSAs*. This report is a summary of what was said on January 31, 2015, at the event that took place at the Winspear Centre in Edmonton, Alberta. This was the GSA hearing or listening event that was sponsored by the Edmonton Social Planning Council, the City of Edmonton Youth Council, and Public Interest Alberta. So I'll table that for you.

The second is an open letter to the Alberta government, which is essentially an article from the *Red Deer Advocate* signed by Leeanne Willoughby from Benalto. She is writing with great concern about the wolf killings that are this government's bizarre way, I think, of dealing with some declining caribou populations: so we'll kill the coyotes. I'll just table that as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the five requisite copies of a sample of thousands of letters that were presented to the government of Alberta by some of my constituents in Leduc county. They're asking that a very dangerous intersection at highway 625 and highway 21 be improved and that it be made a top priority for the Minister of Transportation. I'm very pleased to support their efforts.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act I'm pleased to table five copies of the report by the Auditor General titled *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta*, March 2015.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings here. Both of them are the articles that quote the Premier in the matter that we will deal with in short order with the question of privilege.

3:00

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, I would take the liberty of making a couple of tablings myself. Hon. members, in my capacity as chair and pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act, I would like to table with the Assembly five copies of the following orders approved at the February 4, 2015, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: one, the Executive Council Salaries Amendment Order 11, being Order 1/15, which took effect February 1, 2015; two, the Members' Allowances Amendment Order 29, being Order 2/15, which took effect February 1, 2015; three, the Constituency Services Amendment Order 29, being Order 3/15, which comes into force April 1, 2015; and four, the Members' Allowances Amendment Order 30, being Order 4/15, which came into force on April 1, 2014.

My second tabling, hon. members, is five copies of my letter, dated December 23, 2014, to the leader of the Wildrose and the leader of the Liberal opposition respecting the designation of the Official Opposition following the changes to caucus membership last December.

My third tabling is five copies of the House leaders' agreement signed March 9, 2015, regarding Oral Question Period rotation, which I referred to in my statement earlier this afternoon.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Denis, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, a book entitled *A Silent Cheer: Against the Odds* by Dr. Emily Roback and Faye Roback-Jones.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, we'll move on to points of order here first. Let me begin, please.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: Before we get into points of order that were raised today, specifically one point of clarification, I want to address one point of order, that was raised yesterday, March 10, 2015, by the Official Opposition House leader, on which I promised a ruling once *Hansard* became available since the Blues were not available to me yesterday.

As a reminder, the Official Opposition House leader expressed concern that the Minister of Infrastructure had suggested that language used either by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview or someone was unparliamentary. In his argument, which is found at page 534 of *Alberta Hansard* for yesterday, the Official Opposition House leader noted that it was up to the Speaker to make the determination as to what is parliamentary language or not. While I appreciate the hon. member acknowledging the importance of the Speaker's role in that regard and, in fact, for other measures in this Assembly, this does not constitute a point of order, so we will move on.

Point of Clarification

The Speaker: Speaking of today's points of order, no points of order were issued, but a point of clarification was requested by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, so I want to read something into the record. The Official Opposition House leader requested clarification under Standing Order 13(2) of my intervention during the Minister of Justice's response that a particular issue was in fact sub judice. The situation, as we all heard, is difficult since the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills' question referred to the Minister of Justice's actions with respect to an individual who is apparently facing serious charges in the state of Washington in the United States.

I let the main question go, and I let the first supplementary go, thinking that the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General might say something about the appropriateness of the question in the context of the sub judice rule. However, as members may know and might need reminding, the sub judice rule is codified in Standing Order 23(g). With respect to criminal matters the rule in the standing order applies

from the time charges have been laid until passing of sentence, including any appeals and the expiry of appeal periods from the time of judgment.

Quite specifically, 23(g) says:

A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member

(g) refers to any matter pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination.

And then it goes on.

I called the Minister of Justice to order with a question, which he responded to in the affirmative. I did not interrupt the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, who feels that I did, but I did not. It was the Minister of Justice that I intervened on and asked the question for clarification purposes because I must enforce the rule of sub judice, as you all know full well.

The rule itself, in fact, is a self-imposed rule by this Assembly to respect the judicial process, and nowhere is this restraint more important than when an individual's liberty is in jeopardy. While members enjoy freedom of speech in this Chamber, it is not in the best interests of justice for comments in the Assembly to interfere with an individual's ability to have a fair trial. I admit that the situation is complicated further when the person in question is in another country, but given the link that the member made to offences committed in Alberta and the charges that are now apparently laid in Washington state, I wanted to ensure that the rule was applied in this case, in this House, respecting the Standing Orders, to which we all have agreed. So that clarifies that.

I also would note in respect of the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills that he had requested that his point of clarification be withdrawn. But I wanted to make it clear because other people also asked me about it, so I put the comments on record, and I encourage you to read 23(g) so you'll have that knowledge.

Now we have a point of privilege. I believe that's the next item on the agenda, so let's hear from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, please, with that point.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise on a point of privilege under Standing Order 15(2). It's based on the grounds that the independence of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices has been obstructed by actions outside our committee by members of the Executive Council.

Because the work done in that committee is vital to the independence of several officers of the Legislature and, as such, to their ability to properly ensure government is working in the best interests of all Albertans, the committee itself must be allowed to work independently of undue influence by external bodies such as the Premier's office or facets of the Executive Council. As such, any actions that bring the independence of this committee into question should be seen as impeding the independent work of the committee and impinging on the dignity and respect of members of the entire Legislature.

I'd like to briefly outline why it's necessary and appropriate to raise this point of privilege here today in the Assembly before moving on to an explanation of the facts of the case. Why is it necessary and appropriate to raise the question here? While I have also presented the case related to parliamentary privilege elsewhere to my fellow members of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, it's important to note the reasons why it is necessary and appropriate to raise the point of privilege in the House here to you, Mr. Speaker.

First, because of the method of addressing questions of privilege in the committee settings, detailed on page 149 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* as well as in your ruling as the chair of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services dated February 27, 2013, this case has not appeared before an authority empowered to decide whether it constitutes a prima facie breach of privilege. So while the chair of the standing committee has been empowered to determine whether the matter does touch on privilege, only in the House are we able to deal with matters of privilege, and only you, the Speaker of the House, is empowered to decide whether this constitutes a prima facie case.

Second, while there is no provision in the Standing Orders of the House that explicitly bars a member of a committee from bringing forward a point of privilege, there are precedents that this House will hear questions of this nature without such a report. I would call to your attention, for example, *Hansard* beginning on page 3166. On these pages we see that my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona brought forward a point of privilege quite similar to the one I'm raising today. Further, the aforementioned ruling that you made in your capacity as chair for the Members' Services Committee is silent on the question of whether or not a vote of the said committee is to report on a question of privilege.

Finally, as members of the Assembly our rights are derived from the standing orders that govern the proceedings of this place. We all have certain privileges that are bestowed upon us to allow us to freely and independently make decisions that we believe are in the best interests of Albertans, that have elected us to serve.

The facts are as follows, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday, February 10, both the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and the office of the Auditor General came before the committee to ask for additional funds for their annual budgets approved in December of 2014. At this meeting the request for additional funds for the office of the Child and Youth Advocate was declined, but the request for additional funds for the Auditor General was approved. The following day Premier Prentice and the Minister of Finance held a press availability, saying that this decision of the committee would not be respected, effectively overturning the decision made by the committee.

3:10

In regard to timeliness, according to the rules, the standing orders, privilege must be addressed at the earliest possible juncture. I believe this is the case here today.

Then, breach of privilege. *Ersine May* describes privilege as “the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively” and each member of the House individually, from page 75.

As you are aware, at the commencement of the first session of each Legislature a number of committees are established, and the origin of this committee goes all the way back to November 1977. To help to ensure the independence, this committee consisting of nine members was established on March 20, 1978, and so forth. As will be shown below, the tradition of the Alberta Legislature to date is to treat these committees as if they are populated by private members. As such, it is understood that members are free to consult with anyone, including their fellow caucus members, but also are free from partisanship or the influence of Executive Council.

There are numerous examples, Mr. Speaker, by which there have been rulings on the proceedings of the committee that cannot be directed or represented by the government. A good example is May 14, 1992, when the Speaker ruled out of order a question posed by a member pertaining to whether or not the Premier would agree to direct the proceedings of a Members’ Services Committee in a certain direction, and in the ruling the Speaker said, “The government cannot answer on behalf of the whole committee ... the government ... cannot direct what happens to all the committee.”

Again, on December 1, 2011, a question by the Liberal leader at that time asked the Premier about the decision to appoint Justice Major to evaluate MLA pay, and that was ruled out of order given that it was a committee decision to appoint a judge and, therefore, should not involve the Premier. The ruling there by the Speaker was: “That question is out of order. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly appointed the panel as per the direction of the Members’ Services Committee.”

At the same time the Premier as well as numerous government ministers and MLAs have also maintained that the committees of the Legislature are independent. During the widely publicized choice of the Leg. Offices Committee not to renew the contract of a Chief Electoral Officer, at that time the Premier, Mr. Stelmach, was widely reported as saying that it was not his choice to get rid of this Chief Electoral Officer. On February 17, 2009, he said in the House, “Again, I don’t make the decision on the employment of the Chief Electoral Officer. ... He’s responsible and answers to the Legislative Offices Committee ... they make that decision.” The *Globe and Mail* quoted him at the time saying, “The decision was made ... by the all-party ... committee, and that’s what we live by.”

On April 23, 1992, the then Premier, Mr. Getty, maintained that the Premier has no influence over the Members’ Services Committee. He said:

I also can’t anticipate what the Members’ Services Committee is going to recommend to us. We don’t know. They ... recommend ... solutions, some proposals that none of the members here are currently contemplating. Those are things that I really appreciate. It’s an all-party Members’ Services Committee. I’m pleased that they are going to be meeting ...

and helping with the matter of MLA pay.

So there are lots of instances like this as well as the lack of precedents in parliamentary authorities. As I described, in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* parliamentary privilege can be extended to both individuals and to the House as a whole. In regard to individual rights this includes, for example, freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation. At the same time privileges extended to the rights and powers of the House include the ability to regulate its own internal affairs.

As seen above, the Legislature of Alberta has seen fit to establish special and standing committees of the Legislature to work in a way

that is independent. This concept of independence is especially held to be in the case of the Leg. Offices Committee given its power to make policy decisions on behalf of all MLAs. It could be said that the notion of independence of this committee, whereby the MLAs on the committee are expected to act as private members, has been accepted as a rule. As such, it could be argued that the dignity and respect of the House is on occasion hinging on the idea that these committees make certain decisions on behalf of all MLAs and not in the interests of the government.

On February 19, 2009, the Speaker also injected the following statements between the above passages:

Questions to the Ministry on legislation or on a subject matter that is before a committee, when appropriately cast, are normally permitted as long as the questioning does not interfere with the committee’s work or anticipate its report.

These procedures are in place to protect the work of committees and to maintain order in the House but have not been crafted in order to maintain how committees work without the influence of Executive Council and other political interference. However, they have been used in our Assembly to find that questions that allege the interference of Executive Council in committee were in fact out of order.

This raises an important question. While interference by Executive Council in the affairs of the Members’ Services Committee can be seen as an important issue, rules contained in parliamentary tradition detailing the parliamentary authority prevent us from asking a question along these lines in the Legislature. So this is a very important issue to look at.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, while the authorities may be limited in their ability to define and to take a measure to protect the independence of a committee, they do of course offer insight into the matter of parliamentary privilege and contempt. *Ersine May* states:

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency [even indirectly] to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt.

However, *Maingot*, second edition, also notes that “as a working rule it can be said that when an offence is not identifiable as a breach of known and enumerated rights and immunities, then the offence is a contempt of Parliament.” He goes on to describe how contempt is “described as an offence against the authority” of the House. *Maingot* also states that “disobedience to rules or orders represents an affront to the dignity of the House.”

So when the Premier gathered media to announce that a decision reached by our independent committee of the Assembly was to be immediately disregarded by this Executive Council and the government more widely, it is my contention that the Premier was acting in contempt of both the privilege of the Legislature and the individual privileges of the Members’ Services Committee.

With concern to the privilege of the Legislature, by immediately invalidating a decision already made by an independent committee, it brings into question the independence of the committee itself and, therefore, acted as an affront to the dignity and respect that should be afforded it. While it’s said that the agenda of a political party rules the day, inside the committee, as shown above, it is always maintained by the government that decisions are not government decisions.

With concern to the individual privileges of members the Premier can be seen to have interfered with and obstructed the work of every member of this committee. As an independent committee it should

be seen to involve honest and full debate before decisions are made on important issues.

As such, I respectfully request that you find that we have made a *prima facie* case of a breach of privilege and that you allow us the appropriate time to bring forward a motion to remedy this case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I have the Government House Leader, followed by the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by the independent member, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, and perhaps even Livingstone-Macleod. We've not consumed a huge amount of time, but that was approximately 14 minutes or so.

Let's get to the cut of the argument if you would, Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not known for my long speeches, and I won't go offside that reputation. There is a process for dealing with these points of privilege when they arise in committees of the Assembly, and this process can be found in Standing Order 65 and in a ruling which was given on February 27, 2013, at the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services.

As far as I'm aware of the process that was followed at their committee meeting on February 17, 2015, members of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices debated extensively on whether a possible point of privilege should have been referred to the Assembly. I have reviewed these documents today. If you don't have them, I'd be happy to pass them over to you as well as to the other members. The vote determined that it should not proceed, and it's my understanding that it closed the particular matter.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, more than me, there are many rules and precedents which allude to the fact that Assemblies should not spend time debating issues that have already been decided.

I also refer you in this vein, Mr. Speaker, to *Beauchesne's* 558, which says:

An old rule of Parliament reads: "That a question being once made and carried in the affirmative or negative, cannot be questioned again but must stand as the judgment of the House."

Those are the words of *Beauchesne's* and not the words of myself that I'm quoting.

I therefore would respectfully suggest to you that because a point of privilege on this issue was debated and voted upon by the Legislative Offices Committee, it is not appropriate for the Assembly to debate on that same point of privilege, it's been pointed out to me, the Latin term for that being *res judicata*.

Thank you.

3:20

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler is ceding his spot to the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Strankman: Yes.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and speak in support of the point of privilege raised by the Member for Edmonton-Calder. What we have here is a particularly bad example of disrespect shown to the Assembly as a whole and to the role of individual MLAs in particular. This is certainly not the first time that we've seen interference by the Premier's office in the functioning of a committee and government committee members who then appear to carry out the orders of the Premier. This is not the first time the House has faced questions about the independence

of committees, committees which always have a majority of government members.

In the past we have seen the appearance of interference in the hiring or firing of a particular officer of the Legislature. In one example from 2009 a member stated that the government had fired the Chief Electoral Officer. This resulted in a point of order, and the Speaker in his ruling explained that the decision to appoint someone else was clearly the decision of the committee. In his ruling the Speaker stated: "The committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly, not a committee of the government . . . If there's going to be misunderstanding about this, then why have these kinds of committees?" That can be found in *Hansard*, February 19, 2009.

Here are the facts of the point in question. On February 10, 2015, both the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and the office of the Auditor General requested additional funding for their annual budgets after 2 per cent reductions in December of '14. At that meeting the request for additional funds for the office of the Child and Youth Advocate was declined, but the request for additional funds for the office of the Auditor General was approved. Yet following the February 10, 2015, decision of the committee to approve the funding request of the Auditor General, the Premier and the Finance minister held a media availability and announced that this funding would not be extended.

The independence of all committees is important, but the severity of the issue is very clear. Here we are talking about the committee tasked with appointing the independent officers of the Legislature. These offices were established to watch the activities of the government, report on them, and make recommendations to the government. The announcement by the Premier shows that there's not even the appearance of impartiality when it comes to the budget of this office. This heavy-handed and shameless control of the budget of the Auditor General by the Premier is an insult to the dignity of the committee and the members who serve on it.

An issue about the independence of the Members' Services Committee also came up in 2012. In response to a question Premier Redford at the time said:

My understanding is that the work of that committee was to review the recommendations of the Major report. I understand that that's what they did, and I don't understand that it's my role to direct the members of the committee to do anything.

That's from *Hansard*, October 23, 2012, Mr. Speaker.

She went on to say:

Mr. Speaker, as you have so rightly said . . . this is not a committee of the government. This is a committee of the Legislature that at some point will make a decision that we as MLAs will consider . . . That's why we have a Members' Services Committee. It is the job of MLAs, not the government.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Official Opposition also had concerns about the composition of the committee at the time. We did not have a voting member on the committee, yet the committee business went ahead.

The Standing Committee on Legislative Offices is supposed to represent all parties and make decisions free from interference from the Premier's office. In this case neither happened. If decisions of the committee can be overturned by the Premier or announced in advance by the Premier's office, there is very little reason for these committees to meet. By immediately invalidating a decision already made by an independent committee, this government brought into question the independence of the committee itself. As we've seen, it has always been maintained by the government that decisions of the committee are not a government decision but that of an independent group of MLAs. By immediately reversing a decision arrived at by this group of MLAs, the Premier has interfered with the autonomy of this body to debate and make decisions.

Maingot, second edition, notes that “one of those matters of privilege is the right of the legislative body to control its internal affairs and proceedings free of interference from the Crown or executive, the courts or the public.” That’s on page 293.

To sum up, the Premier has interfered with and obstructed the work of every member of the committee in this case. This shows contempt for those members.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you find in this action a breach of privilege. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I tabled earlier two documents quoting the Premier on this matter. One is dated February 12, from the *Edmonton Journal*, where the Premier is quoted as saying, “I respect the discussion of the committee but there will be no increase in funding to the auditor general’s office.” Then it goes on to say that “the committee is now expected to meet again next week,” leading a reasonable and prudent person to believe that some sort of instructions were given to tell that committee to go back.

Now, on the 18th of February in the Canadian Press the Premier is quoted. When asked if he was overturning the decision of the committee, he replied, “Yes.” He was overturning the decision of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of citations given to you, but I’ll point you to *Beauchesne’s*, page 3, which is just the overview talking about the principles that lie in the basis of English parliamentary law, where it talks about the opposition if the electorate so chooses is to have an opposition that is ready and willing – and this is the quote, so I’m not giving inflammatory language – “to protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority.” Now, what that states is that the role of the opposition has a very important position in our government to basically do its job in the best of the public’s interest. That has to be protected by our own rules of this House and parliamentary rules, which basically stipulate that these committees are independent.

It leads to another question here, which was raised by the member earlier, the one of contempt. We have a *prima facie* case here of the preponderance of evidence that the Premier basically is quoted as saying that he’s overruling the committee. He doesn’t have that authority. He has the authority – the government has the jurisdiction to come down with the budget. That’s their jurisdiction. But the jurisdiction of this committee is to make the recommendation, and the Premier doesn’t have the authority to overrule the recommendation. That’s a recommendation. That’s the independence of the committee.

Now, if the government doesn’t have the money in their budget, so be it, but they don’t get to tell that committee to go back and rescind a decision of the committee. There’s no such right of government to do that, and this is about the fundamental respect.

If you turn to page 83 in the *House of Commons Procedures and Practice* – I have the second edition in front of me – it talks about “while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits.” It gives the Speaker here a lot of latitude in making this decision, and it talks about “deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition).” Somebody here, by the preponderance of the evidence of a reasonable and prudent person, is not being clear or not telling the truth. Was this committee told to go back into a meeting to rescind its decision? Who misspoke? This is really important because we’re

still dealing with the very fundamental issue, in which I say the *prima facie* is made, that the Premier has interfered in the independence of the committee. The government has interfered, and they should be found in violation of that.

Going on further, it talks about this contempt being “interfering with or obstructing a person who is carrying out a lawful order of the House or a committee.” The opposition is carrying out that lawful order. The Premier or any member of the government does not have a right to interfere with the opposition members’ responsibilities on these committees.

3:30

In closing, the decision that is made here is not based on evidence that is beyond a reasonable doubt; it’s preponderance of the evidence. When you look at the evidence, it is basically saying that the Premier has an admission he’s overruling the committee, and then you have the contradiction between the chair of the committee and the Premier, that raises more questions. I would submit to you that a reasonable and prudent person would conclude there were some shenanigans going on here and that the committee was indeed ordered to go back to rescind the decision of the committee.

With that, I will leave that in your care to make a decision, but I believe that the government should be found in violation of the committee’s independence. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We’ll have one final speaker, and that’ll be the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think everything that my colleagues previous to me have said is quite true and right, but, you know, I’m just looking at my crystal ball, and I betcha what’s going to happen here is that the government is going to get up and say, “Hey, those members of the government caucus could have gone in and made any decision that they wanted to, and they happened to make the one that the Premier was hoping they would make,” and this will all be dismissed as not a point of privilege.

But there’s something much worse going on here, and it’s really critical to the election, so I hope people are paying attention. This is what happens when there is a ginormous majority. We are in a position as opposition members right now where we can bring no issue to the floor or to a committee without the approval of a government Tory majority. Nothing. We can do nothing. We can’t get an agenda up on the issue. We can’t get something in front of a committee. Nothing. When you have majorities like this, the government has the power to be able to move forward and indeed make a declaration like the Premier did, that this was going to happen, and then sure enough it happens.

You know, can we directly prove that this all happened as a result of the Premier saying it? Well, no, because they will say: oh, each and every one of them made this decision independently. But we know this isn’t true. I’ve sat on these committees for 18 years. I see people come into the room with scripts that are written for them by the minister’s staff that tell them exactly what to say word by word. How is that independence? It’s not. It’s definitely – you know, they get their marching orders. I know that members get their marching orders to come in and do a certain thing. Otherwise, it’s magical, Mr. Speaker, that every single government member turns up and wants to see exactly a 2 per cent cut in every legislative officer’s budget, not 1.5, not 5 per cent but 2 exactly, every one of them. Magical how they all come up with that on their own.

Mr. Mason: It’s a miracle.

Ms Blakeman: It's a miracle.

I mean, I think this is contempt. I think it's contempt and disrespect for the parliamentary process, but unfortunately it is all completely legit. It is legitimate under the letter of our law, under our parliamentary process. That doesn't make it right, and I don't think the intent is being followed. Members of the government like to get up and say, "Oh, it was made by an all-party committee" as though all parties agreed in this. Well, no, there was one member of one opposition and one member of another opposition and nine members of the government caucus. So what was this, really? It was a government caucus decision.

I have often felt that if we really wanted to be representative, what we should do is have the membership proportion on any of these committees decided by the popular vote from the previous election, and that would give a bit more of a fair fight and a bit more fair representation on these committees. That, of course, is greeted with derision by my hon. members opposite, but I do think that we have a very imbalanced system right now.

It's going to be really important in this upcoming election that we end up with a lot of people in the opposition. Right now there are 14 of us trying to do the work that a few years ago was done by 30 members and the accompanying staff. It's a struggle for us to try and keep this government accountable. This is one of the examples that we face where everything gets skewed beyond what we would like to see, and it's all perfectly legit. But, you know, they get to make the rules, too, because they have the majority when it comes to making up the rules of the standing orders in the House.

So you can see how this all starts to contribute to a disrespect, frankly. I hope that we will see something different soon. I am ever optimistic. I should have my hair in ringlets I'm so optimistic. I could have the middle name "Pollyanna."

I thank my colleagues for bringing this issue up and for making the effort to look up all the detailed references. I am afraid you will be sadly disappointed, and that's why, because we have a very uneven House at this point in time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, I've listened very carefully for over half an hour now to all the members who just spoke. I am prepared to rule on the purported question of privilege that was raised by the Member for Edmonton-Calder. As a reminder to all, a point of privilege, as we all know, is one of if not the most serious charges that can be brought by one member against another.

Now, with respect to the formalities the Member for Edmonton-Calder provided written notice to me in the Speaker's office at 12:59 p.m. on Monday, March 9, 2015, and that notice was copied to the House leaders of the other parties and also to the independent member. Therefore, the requirements of Standing Order 15(2) were met.

I would also like to point out that yesterday was a somewhat unusual day in that it proceeded in a manner that prevented the Member for Edmonton-Calder from giving notice of his purported question of privilege. The member, however, was very gracious in agreeing to let this matter proceed today, and I want to thank him for his indulgence in that regard. To be clear, there is no prejudice to the member's application arising from the rescheduling of the matter to today rather than having been considered yesterday because notice had been provided at the earliest opportunity.

It is my understanding that the same member raised a question of privilege on this very same matter during the February 17, 2015, meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, of

which he is a member. I must say that I feel somewhat restrained in talking about what transpired during that committee's meeting since there is no report from that committee to this Assembly regarding the purported question of privilege. It is my understanding that while the chair of the Legislative Offices Committee found that the issue raised by the Member for Edmonton-Calder met the low threshold for possibly constituting a question of privilege, the committee declined to report the matter to the Assembly. So there will be no report on the matter for the Assembly to consider.

As members likely know and should know, members may raise matters concerning privilege as it relates to committees of the Assembly pursuant to Standing Order 65(3). The practice to follow is actually outlined on page 46 of the March 2014 version of the Practical Guide to the Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

It is noted in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 149 that

Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will only hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings upon presentation of a report from the committee which directly deals with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual Member.

Nonetheless, not knowing precisely where the presentations might want to be taken, I did allow several comments to be made.

I am very aware of the procedure that I've just referred to since in my role as chair of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services I faced a similar situation to the one just faced by the chair of the Legislative Offices Committee concerning a purported question of privilege. In fact, it is exactly the one before us at the moment. On February 27, 2013, I found that alleged interference in the work of the committee met the threshold for privilege, which led to the committee at the time voting on the matter. A motion to send the matter to the Assembly, however, was defeated, and that concluded that matter at the committee level.

3:40

One has to wonder why this matter is being raised in the Assembly when it was already raised and dealt with by the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. If the committee had voted to report the matter, then it would be before the Assembly. However, as I've said, the committee chose not to do so. Now, as Speaker I am keenly aware that questions of privilege are very serious matters, as I've already said, and that they directly relate to a member's rights and immunities. As such, they should arise infrequently. The time of this Assembly is also valuable and important. As I stated on November 20, 2014, at page 88 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day in ruling on a purported question of privilege that had been raised before, "It is not in keeping with parliamentary tradition to raise a matter that has already been decided."

In this instance, the matter raised by the Member for Edmonton-Calder has been the subject of review, consideration, and decision by a committee of this Assembly. As Speaker I find that the principle of avoiding duplication of proceedings applies here.

In conclusion, this matter was considered under one process and should not be brought up in a different process, in a different venue so as to constitute a de facto appeal of the committee's decision outside of the established practice. Accordingly, I find that the purported question of privilege is not in order and therefore does not constitute a prima facie question of privilege. Under Standing Order 15(7) that concludes this matter.

Thank you. We'll move on.

Orders of the Day

Committee of Supply

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2014-15 General Revenue Fund

The Chair: Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of supplementary supply, I'd like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaker rotation. As provided in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (d) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the fourth party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .

And any member may speak thereafter.

During the above rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the above rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes.

Provided that the Chair has been notified, a Minister and a private Member may combine their . . . speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor [during] the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 20, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration of this matter is six hours. The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2014-15 supplementary supply.

I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates. The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to move the 2014-15 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund. When passed, these estimates will authorize approximate increases of \$730,000 for the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$459 million in voted operational funding, \$705 million in voted capital funding, and \$63 million in voted financial transactions funding for the government. The estimates are consistent with the fiscal plan as presented in the 2014-15 third-quarter fiscal update and economic statement.

In addition to the Child and Youth Advocate, these estimates will authorize increases for the departments of Aboriginal Relations, Education, Energy, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Health, Human Services, Infrastructure, Justice and Solicitor General, Municipal Affairs, Service Alberta, and

Transportation. The ministers responsible for these departments will be pleased to answer any questions from members of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

I will recognize the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler speaking on behalf of the Official Opposition. Hon. member, do you wish to share your time back and forth with the minister? We'd need to clarify that up front.

Mr. Strankman: Well, if he'd wish. It would be in order.

The Chair: Where will you start, hon. member?

Mr. Strankman: Well, I was hoping to start with Energy and the environment.

The Chair: So you're starting with environment, hon. minister?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we do them just alphabetically and do each department and get it done. Otherwise, we'll be all over the place.

The Chair: Each department alphabetically? Are you prepared to start alphabetically? If you're not, if you're going to skip a particular ministry . . .

Ms Blakeman: If we don't go fast enough, we don't get to stuff, so I think we should be allowed to choose.

The Chair: Okay. Hon. member, do you wish to start, then, with Energy, or is that ESRD? Just to be clear, where exactly are you referring to those numbers?

Mr. Strankman: Well, I wanted to speak about the Energy department primarily.

The Chair: That's fine. The Minister of Energy is here.

Minister, you're willing to share the time back and forth with the member?

Mr. Oberle: Whatever.

The Chair: Proceed, hon. member, and the clock will start.

Mr. Strankman: Well, by the numbers that you've presented here, there is some increase of \$7.7 million, and I was wondering if there is any itemization of that that you could fulfill with me to understand why the increase. It's been purported in the media that there will be budget maintenance at least if not a reduction, so I was wondering if you could . . .

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Oberle: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise and address the member's question. First of all, I want to clarify for the member that we're not discussing budget here today. That'll be coming shortly. The budget, of course, hasn't been tabled in this House, and whether or not there's a reduction in the budget or maintenance or anything else will be subject to a budget debate at that time.

Today we're here to discuss supplementary estimates at third quarter, Mr. Chair, which involves spending within the current year's budget, and I'm pleased to address that. The member I thought said \$7.7 million. Actually, there's \$57.7 million in supplementary supply related to the Department of Energy. So I can

tell the member in complete detail that \$57.7 million in compensation was for lease agreements cancelled under the land-use framework.

Mr. Chair, in the Fort McMurray urban development subregion, which was development around Fort McMurray, \$49.9 million is for what is known as UDSR, the Fort McMurray urban development subregion. Those are leases that are cancelled in accordance with that development proposal. That's compensation for 27 agreements held by 10 different companies. In the lower Athabasca regional plan there are a number of agreements that were cancelled in order to establish new conservation and provincial recreation areas in the region, so \$7.8 million is for leases cancelled under LARP. That's the full summary of the compensation that we provided.

3:50

Mr. Chair, the mineral rights compensation regulation is a strong and solid system that ensures fair compensation of incurred costs to companies affected by lease cancellations. It's the process that was applied here. Ultimately, actions taken by government such as deliberate land-use planning resulting in lease cancellations show how we guide resource development in Alberta to meet the triple bottom line of environmental protection, economic benefit, and social licence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Yes, sir. I'd like to apologize to the minister for my quote regarding the numbers. I guess it could be related to my age and my eyes. It's well received.

Can you also explain, sir, how that funding was arrived at? Was that the money that was actually spent by those companies for those leases? Is there any actual physical value related to their purchase of those leases?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, I was not actually privy to the negotiations that happened with the individual companies. I of course delegate that activity to the department. I can assure this House that it was done in full compliance with the mineral rights compensation regulation, which allows for the repayment of land purchase costs, the cost to purchase a lease, and certain sunk costs. It does not accommodate future or opportunity costs. I'd invite the hon. member to look up the regulation. It's quite comprehensive.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my understanding, too, that the single energy regulator bill, Bill 2, allows for complete discretion of the minister in this regard.

I'd like to move on to Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and talk about the additional costs there, the supplementary. I understand there are additional increases to wildfire hazards and the mountain pine beetle surveys. Can you explain to me how the \$41 million for mountain pine beetle survey assessments, control, and rehabilitation was arrived at?

The Chair: I recognize the minister of ESRD. The question around mountain pine beetle . . .

Mr. Strankman: I'll repeat, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Fawcett: Sure.

The Chair: Please.

Mr. Strankman: Mountain pine beetle surveys, assessment, control, and rehabilitation worth \$41 million: could you fill me in a little bit on how that was achieved, how that was attained, how that's brought forward? I understand it's somewhat of a seasonal event.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Fawcett: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. This is money that has been expended probably for the better part of the last decade on controlling mountain pine beetle. Obviously, many members of the Chamber are aware of the financial risk that mountain pine beetle poses, particularly to the forestry sector, as well as some of the environmental health risks to our forests. This is money that has been invested year over year. This is the same amount of money that was put into the budgets of previous years. One of the challenges that we faced was that for whatever reason we typically have not budgeted for this expense, like I said, but it's been expended over the last decade.

I could tell you as minister that it's something I'm advocating for with the current Finance minister, getting it as an ongoing expenditure. The reason why it hasn't been budgeted in previous years and why it wasn't budgeted this year is that the hope, I guess, was that eventually we would be able to completely or substantially reduce the expenditures in this particular area because we'd successfully thwarted the risk from mountain pine beetle. I could tell you that the work that this \$40 million does essentially keeps it at bay and prevents it from progressing even further. This will be ongoing work that is not only done this year but will have to be done next year and the following year.

There is a good part of the story with this particular budget item, and that is that we signed an MOU with the government of Saskatchewan. They're contributing \$1.3 million as part of our mountain pine beetle program because they definitely have an inherent interest to try to keep that particular species from moving further east. So we are getting some money from another jurisdiction to help offset some of the costs in this area.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. I also wanted to ask the ESRD minister: in regard to flood infrastructure recovery measures my understanding is that it's some 14-plus million dollars. Have some of these funds been allocated, or what's the position? I know that in my constituency of Drumheller there's still a question about the timing of that. If you could go on further to the flood hazard identification program, there are some greater funds brought forward there, too. I don't know if you want to do it singularly. I'll be happy to oblige.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of ESRD.

Mr. Fawcett: Yeah. We are spending an additional \$14 million, as the member correctly identified, for continued implementation of infrastructure recovery measures. This is specifically in regard to putting together what is essentially our mitigation and resiliency team, that is going through and doing all the work in assessing all of the different proposals for flood mitigation. There are a number of projects that were put on the table. We've had to assess, look at which ones might be feasible, may not be feasible over the last year. There have been a number of decisions made. We're still working through some of those decisions. For some of these projects – these are very large projects. For example, with the Springbank reservoir project we're in, you know, the couple hundred million dollars area.

This money is going to work in trying to get the information we require from those decisions, not to mention that we also have the Alberta community resiliency program, of which we've had over \$700 million of requests from municipalities. Those need to be assessed and looked at and prioritized, and that's what this money is for.

Mr. Strankman: To be clear, Mr. Chair, the Alberta community resiliency program is also included in this?

Mr. Fawcett: Just to be clear, this is operational funding; this isn't the capital money that will be provided to municipalities. This is money that pays for staff that will work on assessing those applications.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. Also, I find in here some \$969,000, approaching \$970,000, for flood hazard identification. I was wanting to know if that would include communities like Drumheller, where I believe they've flown the area with lidar to understand if there are going to be continuing issues there. Would that be part of this funding?

Mr. Fawcett: Yeah, that is part of this funding. Shortly after the floods in 2013 a decision was made to invest I believe it was about \$8.7 million over three years in enhanced flood hazard mapping activities. After looking at what was needed to be done and the priorities, there was an additional million dollars that was asked for for that, and that's what this additional expenditure is for, to supplement that.

The Chair: The hon. member.

4:00

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. The hon. minister is well aware of constituency issues that I brought forward. I don't see it directly related in the allocation of funds here, but there is the issue with the management of the elk herd in Suffield base, and I was wondering if any funds required are brought forward here that aren't specifically shown. This may be a new issue that's going to be brought forward in this next fiscal year, but I want to know if some of that – because that has been an ongoing problem.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Fawcett: Yeah. I thank the member for his question. The issue with the elk population within the CFB Suffield area is an ongoing issue, and it is an issue that we're addressing. However, as far as the resources required to deal with this issue, it is part of our ongoing wildlife management budget, and there are no additional resources that are required for this. It is merely some different policy decisions that need to be made, and that is not going to require any additional money.

The Chair: Thank you.

Back to the hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to roll over to Health here, where there seem to be also some other improvements or increases in the supplementals, so to the minister. I understand there's \$157 million for operational spending – it was lower in other areas; totally, it increased to \$206 million – \$54 million more for physician services, \$39 million more for primary care physicians. In my constituency of Drumheller-Stettler the physician population is dropping, so could you give me some sort of an idea of how this

is spread to urban and rural? Is there a future program to increase? Like, why are these numbers being increased?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Yeah. Thank you for the question. One of the challenges is that in Health we aren't able to stop doctors from billing. Doctors who are in greater prevalent areas are continually billing, so the numbers go up. Where you have fewer doctors, unfortunately in some of the rural areas, billings go down. We're trying to encourage, through various programs, doctors and PCNs to expand into rural areas, but that is a challenge. The increase in physician cost is made up, really, of two numbers. One is the higher anticipated number of physicians, and then the number of undergraduate and graduate physician development programs. So it's really a matter of supply and demand that has the greatest impact on our program.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Strankman: I also see that there's \$120 million more for labour agreements at AHS. Is that ongoing? I had understood that a lot of those contracts had been settled.

Mr. Mandel: No. Unfortunately, there were new labour negotiations and new settlements that happened, and this is one of those. I think it could be the UNA agreement that was settled, and that caused a dramatic increase in our costs.

Mr. Strankman: I also see that there's \$170 million for pharmaceutical costs, and \$124 million is for seniors' drug benefits. Could you explain to me how that's allocated there, pharmaceutical costs? In the rural areas the allocation of benefits to the pharmacies is being reduced, actually, so how could those pharmaceutical costs be rising?

Mr. Mandel: A lot of it is the cancer drugs. There's an incredible increase in the cost of drugs to fight cancer, various specialized drugs, and that's made a big difference. The seniors population is growing, so there's more allocation of drugs. People take them, and we pay for them.

Mr. Strankman: I'd like to now rotate over to Human Services, please, Mr. Chairman. It says that there's some \$46.8 million in additional spending – of that, \$38.7 million is being redistributed – with \$43.4 million for employment and income support programs. Can you explain to me how the funding is transferred?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you. I'd be happy to answer your questions. There is \$47 million in operating in the sup estimates and \$500,000 in capital funding for Human Services. The \$43.4 million of this allocated to employment and income support includes nearly \$41 million approved in the first quarter and \$526,000 approved in the third quarter. This extra funding is for costs to support unemployed clients who are not eligible for employment insurance and other clients with low levels of literacy and essential skills. As well, \$1.9 million was also approved for the targeted initiative for older workers. So this \$43.4 million total was offset by a transfer from the federal government under the Canada-Alberta job fund and the targeted initiative for older workers, and there is no net effect on the province's fiscal position with those transactions.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Strankman: The hon. minister said that there was a transfer, that there is federal government involvement here. Can you explain to me what percentage that is?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you. That would be under the Canada-Alberta job fund, and that was offset by the amount of \$43.4 million. No, that's not right. Sorry. I am actually not sure of the exact portion. But of the \$36 million of supplementary funding – well, that's another matter, support to persons with disabilities. I would suspect that of the \$43.4 million, the transfer from the federal government – I would have to get back to you, but I suspect it's a portion of that amount.

Mr. Strankman: I just wondered if you knew what percentage it was. Is it 5 per cent or something along those lines?

I see here it has \$36 million to support persons with disabilities for the Michener Centre operating costs. Could you explain to me why there is a wage disparity between agency employees and equivalent public-sector employees for the Michener Centre?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you. I'll deal with Michener. We know that \$36 million was allocated for support to persons with disabilities, and of that, \$12.4 million was approved in the first quarter for agency wage funding. That was the increase that we gave to part of the commitment that was made in terms of increasing the wages for persons that are working in the caregiving area with individuals with disabilities, so that's where the wage is from. Then \$10.7 million of that was approved in the third quarter to keep the Michener Centre open as well.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to jump over to Infrastructure if I could for a minute. For the numbers that I have in front of me, \$15.25 million in new funding as well as \$8.8 million in reorganized funding to come forward, can the minister explain exactly what projects are involved there?

The Chair: Thank you.

I believe the Minister of Health will speak on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mandel: Yes. What was the number for the first one? [A timer sounded]

The Chair: That's just indicating that your first 20 minutes are over, hon. member. We'll continue for another 20, and you'll still get your hour if you choose to use it.

Mr. Mandel: So the first number was?

Mr. Strankman: It was \$15.25 million in new funding as well as \$8.8 million in reorganized funding.

Mr. Mandel: Okay. The \$8.8 million was made available from lower than budgeted expenses in other programs: \$4.7 million in savings identified as part of the cost-containment measures in December of 2014 and \$4.1 million for the reallocation of the operational vote to amounts not voted to reflect a more accurate classification of the asset term provisions for the Swan Hills Treatment Centre.

And did you say \$50 million or \$15 million?

Mr. Strankman: One five.

Mr. Mandel: One five. Okay. Thank you. I have that here.

The Chair: I believe the Minister of Energy wants to supplement what you're offering, hon. Minister of Health, or were you finished?
The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Oberle: I rise, Mr. Chairman, as Deputy Government House Leader. I guess I'll call it a point of order although it's not actually what it is. I wonder if I might beg the indulgence of the committee to address an obvious difficulty that the Minister of Health is having, that he may be able to address the committee from a seated position. The committee extended the same courtesy to me at one time when I had a broken ankle. I believe the Health minister might find it a bit more comfortable to speak from his chair.

The Chair: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, I believe that's quite reasonable. I have observed all day the minister's difficulties.

So, yes, we will allow you to address the committee from your chair.

4:10

Mr. Mandel: The \$15.3 million includes \$3 million for planning funds, and then there was \$20.9 million for the 2013 Alberta flood recovery program. That was offset by \$8.8 million in funding available from lower than budgeted expenses.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I find it quite ironic that the Minister of Health is in a debilitated position, especially in this province.

Mr. Mandel: Well, we all have issues.

Mr. Strankman: Most certainly we do.

The \$20.8 million for flood recovery: that's an additional program? Can you give me some idea of the direction of that? Is that to the broad DRP program, or is there any specific location? It says \$19.9 million for relocation.

Mr. Mandel: My notes say \$20 million for floodway relocation programs. That's what it says, just relocation to various locations. It does not say specific sites.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to move now to Justice and Solicitor General. It says that there's an extra \$16.7 million requested, \$5.5 million for legal aid and \$11.4 million for labour agreements in the adult remand and correctional centres. Can you explain to me if that's a new contract or if that's some continuing negotiations?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services will give you an answer on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Yeah. Thank you, hon. member. I'll just reference the \$16.7 million. The minister has provided me with the information. The \$11.3 million is an increase for costs associated with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and management agreements that were ratified in July 2014. In March 2014 the government offered a one-time lump-sum \$1,850 payment to all staff for the '13-14 increases, which required an expenditure accrual with payments pending ratification of the agreement. This

unforeseen cost caused the ministry to overspend its '13-14 voted appropriation. Consequently, the estimates were encumbered by \$11.3 million to cover this shortfall.

Second, there was a \$5.5 million increase in grant funding to the Legal Aid Society of Alberta, and the additional funds will ensure Legal Aid Alberta maintains current service levels as well as increasing the financial eligibility guidelines so that more applicants, including individuals receiving AISH, have greater access to full legal representation.

Finally, there was a \$120,000 reduction in expense from lower than budgeted expenses in other programs.

Mr. Strankman: So to be clear, I understand that there is a certain amount of funding that was required from an overallocation of money. Is this a common occurrence? Is that money taken from future allocations to that department, or is that removed from some other funding source?

The Chair: Hon. minister, have you got that information?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, hon. member. I think that when you look at situations like this happening, especially when there are unanticipated costs for employee wages, that's something where when those agreements are made, we have to abide by them. We can't control when they come out. Then the \$5.5 million increase in the grant funding for the Legal Aid Society was something that came later in the year. It was really important to do, and that is why it's been brought forward now as a supplementary estimate.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Not to miss anybody, I'd like to speak to the Minister of Municipal Affairs with some questions if I could. The information that I have in front of me says that the supplementary amount of some \$400 million was – and we discussed that, I understand, yesterday to some extent in the House – for municipal sustainability initiative grants. Can I be apprised as to how you arrived at the increases there?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, and thank you for the question. It's an important question. As you know, it's an extremely important program for our municipal leaders. The \$400 million is an amount that we're looking at so that we can make sure, as the economy is slowing down with \$50 oil, that we're still putting money towards municipal sustainability projects on the infrastructure side so that they can build out projects now while we're starting to see prices come down. Very, very important for our municipal leaders with regard to that. The actual amount is \$398 million but, as you say, hon. member, right around the \$400 million piece. Very important not just from the fact that prices are coming down, but also creating jobs, creating the economy going, and a lot of these projects. The RFPs have been out, and they're ready to go, so certainly important for them. As I said yesterday in the House to your colleague, another hon. member in the House here, with regard to – AUMA and AAMD and C were with us as were the reeve and mayor of the city and county of Red Deer. MSI is an extremely important program for our municipal leaders, as you know and have spoken about as well. Again, this is to help move existing municipal infrastructures forward as well.

Mr. Strankman: To be clear, this MSI funding – we have heard in the House even today that there are issues regarding bridge funding, et cetera. Could that funding allocation, MSI funding, be allocated

differently within the municipalities for those needs, or is that something that's directly required by the MSI grant or bridge funding to be used only in that area?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you. That's a very good question, hon. member. The MSI funding: I was actually at the table as a vice-president for AUMA when we actually designed the program. The program was so that municipalities would have the flexibility on the capital side – there's a small amount that's operational as well – to pick the projects that are important for their communities because they know, dealing with their constituents and in their communities, what's more important. As the Minister of Transportation said earlier today in a question, the municipalities can choose to use capital funding for what they want. That might be for a bridge; it might be for a waste-water project or recreation centre. We have roads. We have numerous things that they can use it for. But the purpose of MSI is to have long-term, stable funding and to give the municipalities the opportunity to choose the programs and projects that are most important to them. So, yes indeed, they could use it for bridges.

Mr. Strankman: I'm sorry, hon. member, with your voice I was surprised you would take that length of time to answer the question so simplistically.

Mrs. McQueen: I just always want to give you the full amount of information, sir. We're always working so hard on this side to please the opposition.

Mr. Strankman: Well, I completely respect as a farmer that it's always important to haul a full load.

The supplementary amount of \$6.1 million is requested with \$51 million made available by lower budgeted expenses from that; \$32 million approximately is for disaster recovery and municipal wildlife assistance programs. Is that up or down from – I understand that in other jurisdictions we have the disaster recovery program. Is this 32 point some-odd million dollars part and parcel of the flood mitigation?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you very much. Those were interesting comments you made as a farmer. I was a farmer's daughter for many, many years. Haven't really heard those comments before. You could take them many ways, but it's good we're having a little bit of fun here in the House as well. Now that we've all let each other know our agriculture backgrounds, I'll get to your question.

The answer to your question is, of course, that when disaster hits, we don't know from year to year what those may be. With Municipal Affairs the disaster program as it relates to wildfire is much different than the disaster program that the Minister of ESRD has as it relates to wildfire. His are on Crown, and ours would be on municipal land. So \$32 million for this year for the supplementary estimates is provided for several disaster recovery and municipal wildfire assistance programs as we assist our municipalities in that. It includes with this the DRP for the 2014 southwestern DRP of \$30.7 million. The DRP for the MD of Taber is \$0.7 million as well, so with regard to that that's where make it up. In addition, in 2013 we still had some outstanding costs for Slave Lake, \$0.3 million for municipal firefighting emergency operation costs in addition to \$0.4 million that were related to the

costs to convert the town ball diamonds to interim housing sites, that was still left over from the 2012 Slave Lake fires.

4:20

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. I see here on a line-by-line thing that there's some \$700,000 for Alberta emergency alert broadcaster units. Can you give me some understanding of why that funding would be required? Are there updates involved there, or are there greater areas required to be broadcast to? I would think that modernization may reduce the costs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, hon. member. [interjection] The Minister of Energy is adding his thoughts into this conversation, so I apologize; I'm not laughing at the question. It's a very good question. It's the Minister of Energy that's quite amusing these days. [interjections] No, no. It's fine. I didn't catch it all, so I'll leave it.

As you know, certainly, Alberta emergency alert certainly saves a great deal of lives, and it's the emergencies that are unpredictable. There's the amount being requested, \$700,000 to pay for broadcaster units. These units enable Alberta's broadcasters to be in compliance with the Canadian radio and television commission's new standards. They have put new standards in. Alberta has put \$700,000 to be in compliance, and this technology really helps us ensure a consistent ability to access across the province to make sure these alerts are there for public safety and that we have our standards the same as the CRTC new standards.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Most certainly public safety is paramount, although my friends who live at the Little Red Deer Store east of Sundre . . .

Mr. Anglin: Hey, hey. Get out of Sundre. You're in my territory.

Mr. Strankman: It would appear that the independent member now from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre feels that I may be cutting some of his grass. It's unfortunate. But I do have some friends in his riding, and they were very frustrated that they did not receive a warning because of the rising flood waters. I just wanted to throw that in for information.

I also have the information of \$470,000 added for the new home buyer protection program. Can you help me to understand why there's extra funding? I thought that with the legislation going forward, that was not going to increase any cost to government for that legislation.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you. That's correct, and I'm glad that you mentioned your good friend, your colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and that the folks there thought that they were not notified. Now we have a system that will be enhanced to make sure that we're rectifying those issues, so thank you for recognizing that. I'm sure he's grateful for you to be cutting some of his hay over there as well.

So the new home buyer program is part of that commitment. To keep the program running effectively, we are requesting \$470,000 to address increased expenses due to a projected increase in the construction of housing units. These costs, as you did mention, will be offset by additional new home warranty registration fees collected by the government due to increased construction activities, so that's where the offset comes for that request.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. I also see that the Alberta community partnership is increased by \$30 million for our capital. Can you please explain the reasoning for that?

Mrs. McQueen: Absolutely. It's very important with the ACP, Alberta community partnership, that this is an opportunity for two or more municipalities – but then there could be some other partners as well – to partner for regional projects that bring regions together in collaboration. This is an important amount. As we move forward, \$29,600 will be there so that the municipalities can work on regional partnerships, more collaboration. The deadlines have passed for submission. As you could imagine, hon. member, we would be having way more submissions than we have dollars.

This is certainly a program that I'm actually really excited about because it shows the true collaboration that's happening, whether that be here in the capital region, in the southern region of the Calgary metropolitan area, or clearly across the province. This is something that our municipalities, whether they be urban or rural, are really looking at, the opportunity to partner and to access dollars toward these. So there are some very interesting projects that have been applied for with these funds.

Mr. Strankman: For these funds, hon. member, a member that was from my constituency who previously also sat in this House made comment that in his day the issuance of taxation dollars cost roughly three to four times the dollar that was actually issued as a remuneration to the constituency or whatever cause it might be. I was wondering if the minister might have any idea that – Alberta community partnership has increased by \$30 million, but could you give me any personal insight as to how many tax dollars it takes to collect those \$30 million?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a very interesting question, and I'm so glad that you brought up the hon. member that used to serve in your constituency before you, an outstanding member who did outstanding work across this province and someone who I and I know my colleagues on this side of the House and I'm sure across the way as well were very, very proud to work with. An outstanding member Mr. Hayden was and certainly someone that I have the utmost support and admiration for, who did an outstanding job in so many ministries across this province.

As the \$29,600 is new money in here, and it certainly is – you're asking what's the cost of implementing the program. It's part of the staff that we have with Municipal Affairs under the granting program, so it's being absorbed with the current staff that we have in place.

Mr. Strankman: So just to be clear, hon. member, the money issued is including the administration costs?

Mrs. McQueen: Oh, sorry. Then I wasn't clear on your question, so thank you for that. This is just for the capital piece of it. We already have staff in place that administer grants, so this is strictly the money that is for the capital grants to the ACP.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you. I may not have been completely clear with my question and/or my statement because I still respond to former MLA Shirley McClellan as the Member for Drumheller-Stettler and my MLA. Mr. Hayden has other notoriety.

I'd like to move on, if I could, to Service Alberta and the supplemental...

Mrs. McQueen: Maybe, hon. member, just a last comment just so we can close out Municipal Affairs. Absolutely, Shirley McClellan is one of the most outstanding women, as are many, that have served in this Legislature, and I'm glad that you recognized Shirley. Both Shirley McClellan and Jack Hayden have served this province with a great deal of pride, so thank you for recognizing both of them.

Mr. Strankman: I'd like to move on to Service Alberta if I could.

The Chair: Okay. We'll start your last 20-minute segment, hon. member. Of course, we'll continue in the same format, so please continue.

Mr. Strankman: Well, if that's agreeable to the members opposite, I'm happy to try and continue the discussion.

The Chair: Carry on.

Mr. Strankman: Under Service Alberta I see there's an increased supplemental of \$5.4 million, and \$7 million is for motor vehicle services for secure ID. Would that have anything to do with the potentiality of the government changing the licence plate designation?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services on behalf of the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you. Thank you, hon. member, for your question. Actually, what this amount does reflect is additional expenses incurred to meet the increased demand for motor vehicles services like drivers' licences and ID cards, and this was associated with the greater-than-expected population growth that we had over the past year. The additional expenses both in terms of transaction volume and the work to increase the activity – and this is certainly not negatively affecting the security integrity of Alberta's information. That's what it was referring to.

Mr. Strankman: Okay. It also mentions \$4.5 million for postage stamps for the registration mail-outs. Is there not some other methodology that could be achieved at doing that?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you again, hon. member. Most certainly, the \$4.5 million was used to purchase postage from Canada Post for renewal notices for vehicle registration mail-outs, and \$9 million was used to purchase inventory such as the occupational health and safety handbooks and safety codes, which are sold by the Queen's Printer.

4:30

With respect to other ways of notifying individuals for renewal notices, we know that there's the technology that we have at our disposal with respect to e-mails. The challenge is collecting all those e-mail addresses, but it's certainly, I'm sure, on the minister's agenda with respect to being more efficient with our dollars. But, again, the way that they have been doing it is by mailing the registration renewals in the mail.

Mr. Strankman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would think that they could be cycling in a method of electronically notifying the recipients of their renewal date, by e-mail or something. Has there been any looking into that? I think that would reduce the cost significantly.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Yeah. Thank you again. Previously, as the former Minister of Service Alberta – we began to look at that whole area to look for savings and efficiencies. It's by the first letter of your last name; you more or less know when to go and renew your insurance. That's something I'd be happy to pass on to the Minister of Service Alberta as that's an excellent suggestion.

Mr. Strankman: Also, I see there's almost \$300,000 for the safeguarding of the registry system. Could you explain to me those increased expenses?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you again for the question. I guess part of it is all the personal information that is collected and stored there in the registry system and by the registry agents, to keep the system robust and safe. You know, thousands of transactions take place on a daily basis across Alberta, so it's ensuring that the registry agents have access and they can serve the clients that come to see them in their offices.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the member opposite for her responses.

I'd like to move on to Transportation here, where we have 15 and some-odd million dollars for provincial highway preservation. Could the hon. member give me some sort of background in that regard? In the constituency of Drumheller-Stettler and others that I drive in, it certainly wouldn't seem that there is any great amount of money spent on preservation, let alone maintenance.

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Chairman, I thought we were talking about supplementary supply here, not the budget, because we didn't spend over any money in highway preservation. We didn't exceed the budget there, obviously, as you stated.

But if you'd like, I could explain where we exceeded the budget in supplementary supply. Alberta Transportation requires an additional \$11.9 million for supplementary estimates. You know, this request includes \$1 million for a feasibility study for flood mitigation projects in southern Alberta, and it includes \$15.6 million for unexpected repair work on geological hazards such as landslides and floods. This line item is unexpected; it's not budgeted for. It's, like, emergency things; for example, there were extensive stabilization and rebuilding efforts on highway 744 at Judah hill in the Peace River country. There was a major slide there last year, and we don't budget for that.

You know, that was \$15 million out of our \$11 million over, but it was offset by savings of \$670,000 that we transferred to Municipal Affairs for the basic transportation grant, and that was for program delivery and support services. We also had an operational savings of \$4.1 million related to cost containments in the 2014 year, you know. So that shows the difference of our \$11 million dollars of overspending.

I'm not going to debate the budget, about whether we spend enough on highway maintenance and overlay, because as Minister of Transportation of course I'd like to do a lot more overlay in this province. I just need to talk to my friend the President of the Treasury Board.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Yes. Thanks. I may have interpreted my notes incorrectly there, so I apologize for that.

You mentioned in your dissertation there \$4.1 million in operational savings from 2013, I believe it was. Can you explain? Were those savings rolled forward, or did that go back into general revenue, and if so, what was the incentive for those savings, to do that? I think that's an innovative idea and should be continued.

Mr. Drysdale: Well, you know, it was \$4.1 million in savings in our operational budget. As all government was asked to watch their spending and expenses, a lot of it was actually manpower reduction. Like, we have 119 vacancies in Alberta Transportation right now, so that was a big part of our operational savings.

Mr. Strankman: I still don't understand. I appreciate the savings, and I appreciate the reduction in manpower, but were the savings rolled forward in the budget, or were they taken back to general revenue?

Mr. Drysdale: No. It's supplementary supply for this year's budget. It's savings that we've shown in this year's budget. So going forward, you'll have to wait till March 26, and we'll show you our budget going forward for next year.

Mr. Strankman: Okay. I accept that.

I'd like to move on to Aboriginal Relations. I understand that there is a supplemental requirement of \$8.6 million and \$5.6 million that's particularly on one location. Could you give me some understanding of what that was?

The Chair: The Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Dorward: Yes. Mr. Chair, on behalf of the Premier and Minister of Aboriginal Relations I'm pleased to stand and let the member know that there are two specific areas of work done in that regard.

One is a really good news story, Mr. Chair, in Lubicon Lake, where, many will know, there was a critical shortage of housing. There was the opportunity to get 19 units of the trailers from Slave Lake and move them into Lubicon to address those critical needs, that were in fact identified by the Minister of Energy, which at the time was the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Kudos to the present Minister of Energy for identifying that and working with Billy Joe Laboucan, the new chief there, to take care of some of the absolute, critical needs.

The total in that regard is \$5.6 million. That included much more than just moving trailers on site. It included as well setting those trailers up, which needed to include water and sewage arrangements. Also, there was a small portion of that that allowed the start of water delivery into the community, and that invigorated the community a lot, Mr. Chair.

Having been there twice, I can tell you that the chief and the people of Lubicon are absolutely invigorated by this demonstration on behalf of the people of Alberta towards their needs in that community. As you know, they don't have a land settlement there yet. It's under way, and that's something that the federal government is involved in more than Alberta. So I'm glad to see that this situation worked together, and we're able to help the people of Lubicon.

The second one, Mr. Chair, is \$3 million, which makes up the total amount, and that was under a long-term governance and funding arrangement, the LTA, for the Métis settlements . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, if I may, the side conversations are making it a little hard to hear the member speaking. So if you could keep it down just a little bit, I'd really appreciate it.

Please proceed, hon. Associate Minister.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Three million dollars was allocated to absolutely critical infrastructure needs on Métis settlements. There is a long-term agreement for funding by the province of Alberta to Métis settlement areas similar to a municipal situation where there are dollars allocated for infrastructure. This \$3 million was absolutely critical to get done in this last fiscal year, so we're pleased to be able to assist on that. There is in place under the LTA an \$85 million long-term arrangement over 10 years, so this certainly fit into the parameters of that program.

I thank the member for these great questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, you have just under nine minutes left.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Back to the member. He used the acronym LTA. Could I use the acronym LTA? Could I be understanding of that?

Mr. Dorward: Yeah. The LTA, Mr. Chair, is an acronym for long-term arrangement, which is an arrangement with the Métis settlements whereby they will have access to capital funding in their areas, as I said, similar to an MSI kind of arrangement, where the province assists and supports programs that they have in their areas that are selected by the council of elected representatives of those Métis settlement areas.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. member.

4:40

Mr. Strankman: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I had the fantastic opportunity to have the gathering of the Métis organizations in my constituency in Stettler last summer, and it was an enlightening experience.

You mentioned again the LTA. Can I be understanding of whether that's a provincial-federal partnership along with the Métis settlement, or is it simply a relationship with the province and the local Métis? The Métis are far more diverse in their settlements of the prairies than First Nations.

The Chair: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Dorward: Yes. I thank again this member opposite for these informed questions because it allows me the opportunity to address the Committee of Supply and let the committee know that there are two distinct areas, which is the Métis Nation of Alberta – that would be Métis individuals who are self-identified that are not living in settlement areas. Those are distinct and separate from the eight Métis areas that are designated in Alberta and have for decades been the only place in Canada that has set-apart land for individuals, Métis individuals, who wish to live in a settlement area.

There are eight settlement areas, Mr. Chair. This is a provincial program. There is no federal component of that, so it's us supporting the eight Métis areas – we call them settlements, Métis settlements; they're generally in the north – and that's completely separate and distinct from individuals who are self-identified as Métis but do not live in settlement areas. This LTA arrangement is only with the settlement areas.

The Chair: Hon. member, do you wish to continue?

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to move on. It's unfortunate; it doesn't appear that the Minister of Education is here. Is there anyone willing to . . .

The Chair: Is there someone that will speak on behalf of the Minister of Education?

Mr. Strankman: I have information that \$215 million is being added to the capital budget for Education, and this is an increase of 32 per cent. Can I have some understanding of how this 32 per cent raise was arrived at? Is there a list of priorities that we could see?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy on behalf of the Minister of Education.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise again for the supplementary estimates that we're discussing here today to give an overview of the Ministry of Education's supplementary request of \$215.7 million in total requests. The majority of the request relates to reprofiling of funds for projects.

As everyone knows, the government has a number of school projects currently under construction, both new and modernizations. The majority of the funding request, about \$137 million, was to reprofile funds from one fiscal year to the next, Mr. Chair. Of that amount, \$42 million was reprofiled for Alberta's 35 phase 1 school capital projects announced in 2011; \$65 million was reprofiled for phase 2 school projects. These are the 50 new schools and 70 modernizations announced in 2013 and 2014. Approximately \$30 million was needed to reprofile various other school and modular projects in the '14-15 fiscal year. These adjustments better reflect when the money will be spent within project schedules.

Mr. Chair, I'm sure you're aware and I suspect the member would be aware that when working with large and complex projects such as this, variance from initial schedules is not unexpected. We are required, of course, to book the expenses when they occur. The government also wants to make sure that the right planning is done at the front end of any project in order to ensure that projects are completed on budget.

Another large portion of the Education request was to address student accommodation pressures, Mr. Chair. Education approved \$30.6 million for the Calgary board of education to address urgent enrolment pressures identified in its interim capital plan. This included four starter schools, planning for a new high school, and eight modular classrooms.

Education also approved \$19.4 million for emergent needs in the rest of Alberta, Mr. Chair. This funding was approved in order to address urgent student accommodation pressures identified by several school boards. The funding was for eight new starter schools, the completion of an existing starter school, and modular classrooms for several high-growth areas. Just as a reminder, those 12 new starter schools just mentioned are now moving forward as fully built schools so more students can be accommodated in classrooms sooner.

In addition, Mr. Chair, to help address the deferred maintenance needs in all school jurisdictions, an additional \$20 million was approved to supplement the infrastructure maintenance and renewal program.

Also announced in the fall, \$10 million was approved to allow planning work to begin on 57 new schools and additions and 20 modernizations and replacement schools. These projects are urgently needed to address enrolment pressures in aging school facilities, Mr. Chair. By providing planning funds earlier in the process, government is enabling these projects to proceed much more quickly once they are approved to go to construction.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, Education has also had one other small change, a decrease of \$963,000 as a result of lower than budgeted capital spending in other programs.

That summarizes the supplementary request of the Department of Education, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. I'd like to question the hon. member. He made a comment that pressures determined by the interim capital fund led to a \$30.6 million expenditure for the Calgary board of education. But below that we have a \$10 million expenditure for phase 3 announced during a certain period of the by-elections. Can you explain to me how the \$10 million planning expenditure was actually arrived at? Was it interim capital funding, or what was the methodology? That's what I wanted to drive at.

The Chair: Hon. minister, do you have that information, or is that something you might have to provide to the hon. member?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, I will repeat that the \$10 million was approved to allow planning work to begin on new schools and additions. It was approved in the normal process of capital approvals within the government, through the Department of Infrastructure and the Department of Education, and the spending was booked when it was done.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. I want to also mention to the member that in my constituency I hear about a lot of rural remote fuel tax benefits that were taken away from some of the rural remote school divisions. Are there any allowances for that? Because in the rural areas a lot of those distances are becoming greater between residents, and I don't see any particular increase or decrease in relation to that.

Mr. Oberle: Again, Mr. Chair, the estimates before us are supplementary estimates, so they represent spending supplementary to the government's 2014-2015 budget. There are many, many programs contained within that budget that were spent and allocated as planned that would not be reflected in the supplementary estimates for this year. The member may want to engage the Minister of Education once we get into Budget '15-16 to discuss what the program is going forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, you still have 30 seconds.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the time.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will move on to the members from the third party. I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Before you start, hon. member, would you like to have your time combined with the minister's?

Ms Blakeman: Yes, please.

The Chair: I'm assuming that the minister is – unless they tell me otherwise, then we will proceed as such, so you may begin.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much.

The Chair: You have 20 minutes.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Thank you. I'm very aware of the 20 minutes. It actually makes me kind of crazy that we are working under this particular budget process, which was never what was intended when we started into this because, you know, the opposition

members are trying to debate \$6,820,677.77 per opposition minute. That's, you know, a lot to cover in a minute.

An Hon. Member: And you just wasted two of them.

Ms Blakeman: Well, the wasting would be in your opinion, then, I take it. It's a poor process, and it doesn't serve this place well at all.

Let me talk a bit about the disservice that's going on. In the Department of Education there has been a refusal on behalf of the government to tell us where these schools are. This entire presentation is odd, to say the least, because we keep talking about – wait for this – \$65,161,000 for 50 new schools and 70 modernizations reprofiled.

4:50

Reprofiled: what's that mean? Like, moved? Well, I thought: "Okay. I'll go to the dictionary. What the heck." Reprofiled. Profile is the outline or contour of a human face; a picture or representation of the side view of a head; an outline view of a city or a mountain; an outline of an object, as in a moulding, formed on a vertical plane passed through the object at right angles to one of its principal horizontal dimensions. I'm thinking: are you guys making up words now because you can't think of another way to not tell us something? Reprofiled? What is that?

I mean, what the minister has said in English is that there's money that's been moved, I assume reprofiled, to 2014-15, but when we keep asking, "Where are these schools that you claim are built?" we get no answer. Nobody over there will tell us. So please tell us exactly where the schools that are completed and have children sitting in desks looking at a teacher who is teaching under the Alberta curriculum are located.

I know this is amusing to the Minister of Energy, that this is a big tee-hee joke, but I'd like to know because I listened to the questions today during question period, and all I heard was a bunch of numbers about: we've got 35 schools in development. Even listening to the minister today – you know, it says "\$19,400,000 for emergent needs in the rest of Alberta." The Minister of Energy explains that on behalf of the Minister of Education as eight new schools and a certain number of starter schools, but then he says that the starter schools are fully built.

So what's a starter school exactly, please, by definition and by location? Where are these starter schools? Where have these starter schools now been fully built? Exactly where are they located, please, and in what district? Now, you've got that the planning for 57 schools is under the \$10,000,000, planning for phase 3 new schools and modernizations. Where are those 57 new schools? We'd like to know.

The Chair: Were you hoping to get an answer at this point, hon. member, or are you still going to make some more comments?

Ms Blakeman: Oh, Mr. Chair, I'm just hoping to get any kind of an answer that actually makes sense, and so far I haven't had it. So I live in hope.

The second question you can answer for me is: what is \$41,766,000 for 35 new schools and modernizations reprofiled to 2014-15 due to project delays?

Sorry. One more question, Mr. Chair. Where are the schools that were promised to be finished in 2011? Where are they? These schools that are coming due: when were they started? You really are doing yourself a disservice. It makes it look like you're deliberately trying to hide what you're doing when you can't answer really simple questions about where these are and when they were started and when they were finished. It doesn't serve you well.

I'll let the Minister of Energy answer for the Minister of Education.

The Chair: So, hon. member, in the context of the supplementary supply, the hon. Minister of Energy on behalf of the Minister of Education.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The member doth protest too much, I think. First of all, we're not in a budgetary process. The government through the course of the year spends in accordance with the budget, and in the event they spend supplementary to budget estimates, we're required, of course, to debate the supplementary spending. That's what we're debating here, supplementary estimates.

Now, the government, of course, is required to spend in accordance with the timing of the budget, and in the event that that doesn't happen, we need to move funds. It's not unusual that a four-year construction timeline, for example, might involve budgetary spending within four years, and the movement of those funds between those four years would require that we properly book them. That, of course, is what reprofiling means. The member is cute with the definition of reprofiling although I had never ever thought that reprofiling could mean some change in the shape of my head, Mr. Chair, which is intriguing indeed because of my German heritage and the size of my head. It's something that's of obvious concern to me. I'm well aware that if this head was a planet, it would have several moons orbiting it.

The construction of schools. I understand the member's obvious concern. Where the schools are: well, first of all, they're all in Alberta, Mr. Chair. I can assure her of that. Second of all, every single one of them is listed on the website by name, by location, the phase of construction, when they're finished, how many tiny children's parts are occupying the chairs within those schools if she would just go look them up.

We're here to discuss supplementary estimates. I've fully described the spending of the government in accordance with the rules of spending, and I'll take my chair, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much. Well, I'm going to try and look this up and see if I actually get this information. I'm doubting it, but I'll try.

Reprofiling still isn't a word that appears in the dictionary, so I do congratulate the government on developing new language as a way of describing the movement of money between a four-year period of construction. That's pretty good. But the questions that I was asking were about where the schools were that he actually described that were part of this supplementary supply request. How does one go from building a starter school, which he mentioned as part of I believe it was the \$19,400,000 for emergent needs in the rest of Alberta – how does it go from being a starter school to a fully built school? That is a perfectly legitimate question to be asking given that he himself referenced it in the supplementary supply money that he offered previously.

I would also like to know: what is the current deferred maintenance budget, or debt, I guess we should call it, that \$20 million is being applied toward it in this supplementary supply budget? What is the remaining amount of money in that deferred maintenance debt, again using exactly the words that the Minister of Energy described, the \$20 million for capital maintenance and renewal as deferred maintenance? Taking a chunk out of deferred maintenance, what does that leave the deferred maintenance debt at?

That's two more questions. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Oberle: Yes. I apologize to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for not addressing the starter schools question. Mr. Chair, the conversion was done in accordance with a couple of public announcements that the Minister of Infrastructure made, to begin with that we would build starter schools, which was a concept proposed by a particular school board that was under some pretty significant growth pressure, the thinking being that we would develop the core of a school sufficient to put children in, but perhaps it would be lacking in a few facilities, one of them being a gymnasium, and that as time progressed, we would add facilities on while the school was occupied. That was made in accordance with a public announcement. The funding proposed for it was also made public.

Subsequent to that, the minister also announced that we were converting those to fully built schools, I guess a reversion to the more traditional model of constructing a school. That was done, again, in consultation with a school board and also in accordance with the fact that the particular way of proceeding afforded us some cost savings. I referred to the starter schools because that's how they were referred to in the budget, but in fact they've been converted, as I said in the presentation.

Secondly, Mr. Chair, we are in supplemental estimates, and I described \$20 million that was approved to supplement the infrastructure maintenance and renewal program. The infrastructure maintenance and renewal program is a line item in the '14-15 budget. It was approved by this Legislature last spring, as the member is well aware. I don't have the budget in front of me, but if she would flip to the appropriate page, she would find what the budget number is for the deferred maintenance and renewal program.

Ms Blakeman: I know that this Minister of Energy is a bright man, and I know that he's very capable of understanding the questions that I'm asking. The fact that he's not giving me the information is making me think that he doesn't want to give me the information, so let me try again.

5:00

To the minister: what is the deferred maintenance debt? You should be able to tell me that if you are standing in for the Minister of Education when there is an additional \$20 million going towards it. Yes, there is additional money in the budget – aha; true enough – but you're adding \$20 million to it, so that should be taking money off your total deferred maintenance debt. What is the end number from that? That is part of the supplementary supply budget. I know the minister is capable. I know he's very capable of understanding and giving me that.

The second question I have for him now is: what is the additional number of students that we are having to accommodate under the \$30,600,000 for the Calgary school board of education, and how many additional students are we accommodating under the emergent needs in the rest of Alberta? How many additional students are being accommodated and/or anticipated? If you know you're spending that money, you must know how many additional students you're expecting.

I'll let him answer those questions. Thank you.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, I am not, in fact, privy to a total infrastructure deficit amount. As I pointed out, if the member were to refer to the '14-15 budget, she would find the number for the infrastructure maintenance and renewal program. Obviously, \$20 million beyond that budget number is what we spent and what we're speaking to today, \$20 million. I cannot tell her what the total number is. I'm not sure that that's available.

I also cannot tell her the number of students that the spending pressure is addressing. I would be more than happy to refer that question to the Minister of Education on her behalf, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Hon. minister and hon. member, you have six minutes and 15 seconds left.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. I look forward to receiving that information. It would be preferable if I could receive that information before I had to vote on the supplementary supply bill itself, which should help me actually do that.

Can the minister tell me whether the total amount of \$30,600,000 for the Calgary board of education and the \$19,400,000 for emergent needs in Alberta, those being additional and/or anticipated additional students, is all being used for capital? It's under a capital budget. Is any of it being used for anything besides bricks and mortar? Is it being used for desks? Is it being used for Smart boards? Is it being used for supply budgets? Is 100 per cent of that money going towards building schools? I'll look for that answer.

Thank you.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, the money is going to capital or operational as identified in the budget, and I believe the money she just referred to is identified as capital in the budget, which would mean it's going towards capital expenditures, which would be the construction of the schools. It's not going to Smart boards as supply as the hon. member asked. It's booked in the supplementary estimates in accordance with the rules of our spending, which, I think, are quite clear. So if money is booked as capital, it's spent on capital.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Yes, that's true. But there is a certain amount which any department will not expense out of the year. It becomes a capital expenditure. Computers is one that often comes out as a capital expenditure, especially if they're replacing a number of them. If they replace one, it's going to be expensed out in the year. If they replace 20 of them, it's going to be expensed out as capital. What is the dividing line in this particular ministry between operational and capital? Is he able to tell me that or if it's consistent between departments? I know that it used to be about \$5,000, but the last time I was on Public Accounts was a few years ago, so perhaps it's higher than that.

Mr. Oberle: I'd be out on a limb here to share a line that I'm not aware of inside the Department of Education. Again, I'd be more than happy to refer the question of the hon. member to the Minister of Education.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Thanks. I look forward to that.

The flood money out of 2013, appearing on page 24 of the supplementary supply document under vote 6, 2013 Alberta flooding, it has a credit back of \$963,000, so just under a million dollars. Can I get specifics about where the credit came from, in which part of vote 6? Vote 6 is a big number, so specifically where did that number come from in order to be able to be used as a credit towards some of the other overexpenditures that happened?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, the information I have and shared with the hon. members is that \$963,000 is the result of an accumulation of lower than budgeted capital spending in other areas, so it was transferred capital expenditure to use as a credit in other areas. It

was \$963,000 underspent on other capital projects, and I don't have a detailed list thereof.

Ms Blakeman: Well, it says in vote 6 that it's 2013 Alberta flooding. Does he have no additional information about where the savings were in connection with Department of Education capital spending and the flooding? Or maybe he could get the minister to send us that information as well.

Mr. Oberle: I'd be happy to ask the minister that question as well, Mr. Chair. I suspect that when it's related to capital spending of the Department of Education and flooding, it relates to individual flood recovery projects in schools funded by the Department of Education. I will refer that specific question. If the member wants a list of schools, I'm sure it's available.

Ms Blakeman: Great. Thanks very much.

I'm a little curious why the number for debt servicing program under vote 3, school facilities, is appearing in this document when there's no additional money. The current estimate and the final estimate is exactly the same amount of money. Are you able to explain why it's appearing on the budget page, again page 24? It's showing the capital programs at the top of the page under three programs – school facilities, basic education programs, and 2013 Alberta flooding – and then it references debt servicing program, also under vote 3 for school facilities. It's curious to include it when there's no change.

The Chair: Mr. Minister, can I ask you to maybe provide that information later to the member.

Mr. Oberle: Yeah.

The Chair: Thank you very much. The time has expired, so I think that's fair.

I'll go to the member of the fourth party. I see the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Would you like to combine your time as well, hon. member?

Mr. Mason: I think we can try that. Yeah. It seems fair to me.

The Chair: Try that? So you will have 20 minutes starting now.

Mr. Mason: Okay. Thanks very much. Well, Mr. Chairman, I've been going through the document, which we've just received not too long ago, and I guess I'd like to start with the Environment and Sustainable Resource Development budget. In this budget – and I'm just sort of going from front to back, no particular order other than it's the order that they're presented – there is under operational on page 30 \$8 million to maintain the operational infrastructure and grounds at the Kananaskis golf course during rehabilitation of the course. Then you go down to capital, and there's another \$1,170,000 for the Kananaskis golf course.

5:10

Now, Mr. Chairman, we've heard from the Premier that there is no money in the budget for the Auditor General or the children's advocate – and these are small amounts by comparison – yet, as I see it here, there is over \$900 million for the Kananaskis golf course. I'd like to ask the relevant minister why this is a priority for this government and, you know, why the Kananaskis golf course isn't able to sustain itself from green fees and operate pretty much on a break-even basis. Who is going to answer that, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: That would be the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour on behalf of the Minister of ESRD.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the funding for Kananaskis, it's obviously for flood repair. As the hon. member asked the question, "Can it maintain itself?" I guess that after the repairs are done, it can. Certainly, there will be a part of that funding that will be requested of the federal government, but in the meantime the repairs have to be done. This represents those additional expenditures during this year to do that. I think the other part of the question was: can it maintain itself? I'm not sure that – my understanding is that the course can more than maintain itself once it's repaired. But at this point the government's intention is to fulfill the promises to put it back into workable condition so that all Albertans can enjoy it.

Mr. Mason: Hon. minister, right above the \$8 million there's another \$14 million to continue with the implementation of flood infrastructure recovery measures. So I'm not sure that it's for flood rehabilitation. But I guess the question is: if it is as a result of the flood, being heavily damaged and it needs to be repaired, why didn't the government have insurance?

Mr. McIver: Again, some of the insurance is actually through the federal government and disaster recovery.

Mr. Chair, I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs has something to add if . . .

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you. I'd be happy just to supplement to this as well, to the hon. member as well. This is part of the disaster recovery program, which is also 90 per cent eligible from the federal government. So it meets that eligibility criteria. If anything under these floods had insurance, of course then they couldn't be eligible for the DRP. So in order to access the 90 per cent federal funding, this is the avenue that we're able to make sure.

Mr. Mason: So is this \$8 million our share? Is that our 10 per cent?

Mrs. McQueen: What you have to do first is you have to actually pay out, and then you apply for up to 90 per cent with the federal government.

Mr. Mason: So you're saying that we're going to get 90 cents back on the dollar on this?

Mrs. McQueen: We could receive up to 90 per cent. As we know from other disasters in the province, when we applied to the federal government, we can receive up to – doesn't mean we always receive, but generally as a rule, yes, we can receive up to. But it takes awhile, a few years by the time all of the accounting and everything goes forward, once the federal government also reviews all of that, to receive that money back.

Mr. Mason: Why is this a higher priority than the children's advocate?

The Chair: One at a time and through the chair if you would, please.

Mr. Mason: Oh, yes. Sure. I thought she was done.

I wonder why this is a higher priority than the children's advocate.

The Chair: Hon. member, we're dealing with supplementary supply here. I don't know if the minister might be able to answer that.

Mrs. McQueen: You know, we have to deal, I guess, with apples and apples. The disaster recovery program, which is 90 per cent

federally funded, is different funding and a different – this is about supplementary estimates on that. This is not about the overall budget in different ministries.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, you may continue.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'll just let that go because I have a number of other things to ask.

This question is for Justice and Solicitor General. There are 5 and a half million dollars for legal aid to maintain current service levels and to increase eligibility guidelines. Now, there have been a lot of issues that have been raised around legal aid in this province in the past. I guess my question is what specifically this money will accomplish in terms of legal aid and whether or not it will address the outstanding issues that have been raised repeatedly in this House.

The Chair: The Minister of Human Services on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, hon. member. With comments from the hon. Minister of Justice, the commitment to legal aid is certainly shown in the \$5.5 million in additional funding that was provided, and appropriate funding of legal aid was in the Minister of Justice's mandate letter as well. Certainly, making sure that we ensure that the vulnerable are protected and ensure that the AISH clients can continue to use services of legal aid is very important.

In the 2014-15 budget, as you're well aware, legal aid received a total of \$64.3 million in funding, including \$53.5 million from the government and \$5.5 million in additional funding and \$10.8 million from the federal government.

We know this is a priority for this government and, as well, the continuing challenges with the federal government and the amount that they put in versus the amount that we put in.

Mr. Mason: How does this 5 and a half million dollars specifically help those vulnerable Albertans who require legal aid?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, I think, as the hon. member has noticed, it will ensure that they have greater access to legal representation; that's what it's going to be doing. At the end of the day, it's absolutely necessary to do this, and that's why the Minister of Justice brought this forward.

Mr. Mason: Is this for additional caseloads or additional compensation for legal aid lawyers?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you. I would indicate that what we have been told here is that it's maintaining current service levels and increasing the financial eligibility guidelines so more applicants, including individuals receiving AISH, have greater access to full legal representation.

Mr. Mason: Moving along, Mr. Chairman, to Service Alberta, I have a couple of questions relating to that and, specifically, around the \$7 million for motor vehicle services such as secure drivers' licences and ID cards and increasing transaction volumes and another \$277,000 to safeguard information systems. My question is whether or not this amounts to a subsidy of the private registries in our province and why additional transaction volumes are not paid for by the fees that we all pay now whenever we renew our registration or driver's licence or do other transactions at these privatized registries?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, hon. member. Certainly, we know that the registry agents across Alberta do incredible work. We also know that the fee that is charged per transaction, the \$9 fee that is charged, helps them to defer the expenses for their own costs. With the increased population growth that we had this last year, the almost over 100,000 people that have come to Alberta, we know that there's additional demand for drivers' licences and ID cards. So that is what the additional expense is about, the transactions and the volumes. It's also about the security and integrity of the IT system, the updating that's required on a regular basis to ensure that the information is accurate and to ensure that the registry agents have access to that information to do their good work.

Mr. Mason: Is this money paid directly to these privatized registry offices?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, hon. member. No. This money would go directly to – it's within Service Alberta in terms of what they're doing with the ID cards and the drivers' licences, so that's where the money would be flowing from Service Alberta.

Mr. Mason: It's an indirect subsidy of the privatized directory rather than a direct subsidy.

The Chair: Do you require an answer to that one, hon. member? I guess not. Okay; carry on then.

Mr. Mason: I was just simply summarizing what I thought the minister said, so thank you very much.

Now I want to go to Health next if I can. This is a very large area. First of all, there's a supplementary amount of \$157 million, which is combined with \$206 million that are made available from lower-than-budgeted expenses in other programs. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health, and I don't mind if he just wants to remain seated when he answers. First of all, I guess the question is: where did you save this money? Was this all in your department? How did you not spend \$206 million given the pressures that the system is clearly experiencing now with respect to waiting times and other types of pressures?

5:20

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you. Our need for additional funding would be even greater if we didn't have the \$206 million from this year's budget. Surpluses include lower-than-anticipated operating cost requirements of the South Health Campus in Calgary, grants and initiatives related to continuing care strategy, lower-than-expected demand for flu immunization, and reduced requirements of some children's health initiatives, revised implementation plan for family care clinics, lower-than-expected use of allied health services, cost efficiency and favourable exchange rates in the purchase of blood and blood products, savings from outpatient cancer therapy drugs due to lower-than-anticipated usage and demand for these drug therapies, and a prior-year surplus in health services provided at correctional facilities, and cost savings in frozen information technology projects.

Mr. Mason: Would the minister be prepared to provide to the committee of supply in writing a detailed breakdown of where these savings have been found?

Mr. Mandel: You want us to put numbers beside them? I'd be more than pleased to do that.

Mr. Mason: And break it down. That was quite a long list of areas, so I'd be very interested in seeing that.

There's \$170 million for higher-than-anticipated volumes and costs and for not implementing the pharmacare program in drugs and supplemental health benefits. Now, I'm very curious about this. How come it cost you money to not implement a program?

Mr. Mandel: The program was supposed to be implemented. It was placed into the budget, but it was not implemented.

Mr. Mason: Why did that cost so much money to not do it? Usually when you implement a program it costs you money.

Mr. Mandel: Well, when you put a program into the budget but you don't gain the revenue from it, you're short the money from the revenue.

Mr. Mason: I see. Well, how does that balance against the projected costs of the program, then? Where does that go?

Mr. Mandel: Well, the problem is that a pharmacare program was to be implemented. The 2014-15 budget included that pharmacare program, the potential revenue from it, but then they did not implement the program, so they were short the revenue of \$137 million.

Mr. Mason: Didn't they save on costs as well?

Mr. Mandel: They didn't do it.

Mr. Mason: Did they not project costs for the program as well as revenue?

Mr. Mandel: No. I'm not explaining myself very well. At the time the government made the decision that they were going to have a pharmacare program. They put that as a potential revenue source into the budget, but they never implemented the pharmacare program to collect that revenue. So you have in the budget a hundred and X numbered million dollars that you're expecting, but you didn't implement the program, so you have no money to cover it back.

Mr. Mason: I understand that part, but surely the program had some costs that were planned as well, that were anticipated.

An Hon. Member: It was a money-saving program.

Mr. Mason: So this was a way to make money on drugs?

Mr. Mandel: Well, it was a way to generate revenue. Yes.

Mr. Mason: Why didn't you do it?

Mr. Mandel: I wasn't there at the time. They made a decision not to do it.

Mr. Mason: I see. Okay.

The Chair: I'm thinking the minister may need to send you a summary after this, or a short summary, because back and forth might be a little hard to try to – it sounds like there's an explanation, but I think it might be a little hard to garner that right here.

Mr. Mason: Yes. I would appreciate that because I'm using up my \$6 million minutes quite quickly here.

The Chair: If you would continue with the rest of your question.

Mr. Mason: There's a \$15 million reduction to operating costs for new facilities, resulting in a net increase in grants to Alberta Health Services of \$105 million. I would really like an explanation for how you reduce something by \$15 million and it gives you a net increase of \$105 million, because you may have solved your budget problem right there, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Mandel: Where did you . . .

Mr. Mason: It's page 34, right near the bottom.

The Chair: Item 11, hon. member, on that page, I believe, is what I'm following.

Mr. Mandel: I'm trying to find it.

Mr. Mason: It's \$5 million for support services.

Mr. Mandel: Well, there's \$15 million for diagnostic and therapeutic services and \$5 million for support services. Now, that's partially offset by a \$15 million reduction in operating costs for new facilities. So our new facilities were costing us less. The South Health Campus cost us less money, resulting in a net increase in grants to Alberta Health Services of \$105 million. You have to add them all up. The \$120 million is the gross amount, and then you take away the others ones, and you end up getting the \$15 million, and the \$105 million gives you the \$120 million.

Mr. Mason: Okay. Thank you.

I'm just trying to find my section here on Education. Under capital on page 22 there is \$65 million for 50 new schools and 70 modernizations, reprofiled to 2014-15 to accelerate some projects and address other delays. I know the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre dealt with this a little bit. Reprofiled really means putting it in a different budget year, doesn't it? Doesn't it usually mean, you know, the same project. It could be earlier, but it usually means these are being delayed.

The Chair: Hon. Minister of Energy on behalf of the Minister of Education, you're acknowledging that?

Mr. Oberle: Yeah, I acknowledge it.

The Chair: Okay. Carry on, then, hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Then there's close to \$42 million for 35 new schools and modernizations, reprofiled to 2014-15 due to project delays, and then \$29,740,000 for various other schools and modular projects, reprofiled to 2014-15. As I see this, there are 50, 85 – how many schools have been delayed?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, I don't have that specific information in front of me. Again, I'd point the member to the website, where school by school, location by location the status of each school is clearly on the website of the Minister of Infrastructure. The member would be able to access that information.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Chairman, we're here to approve a very large budgetary amount and to ask the responsible ministers to explain why. Telling me that I should go and look it up on the website when I just got the document just an hour ago is not particularly helpful. The question really is that we're being asked to spend here, I add it up, pretty close to \$125 million for delayed schools. I'd like to know how many schools are being delayed and why it costs so much to delay them. If you postpone them, why does it cost you money?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to refer the question to the hon. Minister of Education. These are not all delays. They're reprofiling it. The money that was needed to be spent on school projects was spent at a different time and outside of the regular budget, so we need to repost the spending. Now, a school-by-school list, while it is available, I would be honoured to forward the question to the hon. Minister of Education. However . . .

The Chair: The time is expired for this segment, hon. minister, but you did make a commitment to forward that last bit of information to the hon. member, so I would imagine he'll be looking forward to that.

I will recognize the next member, the independent Member for Rimbe- Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. You, sir, have 20 minutes. You have the option, if you would like, of going back and forth as the other members have. Is that your wish?

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To go back and forth I think would be a more efficient use of time if that's okay.

The Chair: Wonderful. You may start.

Mr. Anglin: Well, my caucus got together, and the discussions are lengthy and very confusing sometimes, but I think we're going to try to get some clarity. How's that? My question – this is somewhat difficult because I need to make sure it falls within the proper ministry, because it's going to be dealing mostly with flood mitigation. I suspect most of the responsibility is going to be ESRD although some will go to Infrastructure and other to Municipal Affairs.

5:30

Page 31 on ESRD. I'm hoping the minister can tell me the monies allocated for parks flood recovery in the community stabilization, under flooding, and the infrastructure recovery. Is this money that's being spent not just the responsibility of the ministry, but is the ministry assuming the liability for the recovery program? So if something goes wrong, are they there to ensure that it is done right? Can that be clarified for me?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Chair, the government after the flood took it upon themselves to do some of the repairs. I guess when we do the repairs, by default we take some of the responsibility for that, so it's kind of part and parcel of what we do. When we do work, we're accountable for it. I guess if I heard the question correctly and understood it correctly, the short answer is yes, and I just finished the longer answer.

Mr. Anglin: I presume from that answer, then, when I go to Infrastructure on page 43, that when we look at \$891,000 for reconstruction and accommodation and for the \$19 million for floodway relocation – I'll get to the \$19 million in a second. On the \$891,000 for reconstruction and accommodation it is the province that assumes the liability for not just the spending of the funds but for the outcome, which in other words is: whatever they build or whatever they reconstruct, they assume the liability.

Mr. McIver: That was a Transportation question.

The Chair: Oh, Transportation, then. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Anglin: Do you want me to ask the question again?

Mr. McIver: Yeah.

Mr. Anglin: Okay. Page 42 of the estimates.

The Chair: That's Infrastructure; 42 is Infrastructure.

Mr. Anglin: I can't hear you.

The Chair: Page 42 is Infrastructure, hon. member. Just rephrase your question, and I'll get someone on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Anglin: Do you want me to go with the question?

The Chair: Just rephrase your question, hon. member.

Mr. Anglin: Okay. The question is simply this. The \$891,000 that's allocated for reconstruction and accommodation: I just want clarity again that whatever this money is spent on is something that the provincial government takes liability for, that it's done right, and it's done properly.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mandel: So let me just get the . . .

The Chair: This is about the \$891,000.

Mr. Mandel: Yes.

Mr. Anglin: Do we got an answer?

Mr. Mandel: I'm looking.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, if I could weigh in on the question.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, the member seeks, it seems, clarity around the apportionment of liability, and I would assume he's talking about in the event that there's a failure, which then I would assume he's talking about in the event of some future flood. Certainly, if there was any liability attached, that would be a decision most likely of the court of law in the province of Alberta. There's certainly no budget for a liability assumed in the supplementary estimates that we're discussing today. It's possible that as a result of the works of any party that some subsequent event happens that causes damage. That's always a possibility when people do works of any kind, and the liability is often determined after the fact. We have not booked any liability in the operations.

Mrs. McQueen: Do you want me to add . . .

Mr. Oberle: Yeah. The Minister of Municipal Affairs would like to supplement.

The Chair: Minister of Municipal Affairs, please supplement.

Mrs. McQueen: If the hon. member is okay with that, just as a supplement. So if a homeowner is choosing to have the property replaced, then they are choosing that once and once only. If another event happened, if they chose to have their house reconstructed, they could not have that happen again, so further down the road Alberta taxpayers would not be responsible for that. As is, we're moving through the ministries, and the public safety committee is really talking about making sure that we're not allowing – and the legislation was put forward last year by the then Minister of Municipal Affairs ensuring that municipalities cannot rebuild in those areas. We're actually doing in our ministry the regulation in consultation with our partners and stakeholders on that piece. But rest assured, if a home is rebuilt now, it's one time, and it will not

be funded. I think that's the essence of your question if I'm not wrong.

Mr. Anglin: Actually, you're way ahead of the curve on me on that one. I'm going to get to that one. But I think the Minister of Energy was closer to the point. What we have here is – did I just get that wrong? [interjections] Okay. I was going to say that I see you guys laughing. You guys move portfolios around sometimes. I gotta keep up.

The question I have is: as we implement these flood mitigation measures – and in the case of the mapping, of course, that's a different set of liability because the province now will designate what is a floodway, what is not a floodway. What I'm looking at is that when we're doing things like the dredging, the armouring of the banks, and any type of change in waterways, you can affect downstream, you can affect upstream, depending if you inhibit the flow.

What I'm looking for here is – and I've been asked this question by the communities. As you know, I have the community of Sundre. Here we are again. We're in March, and clearly we're facing another flood season. There are issues, and the issue that we're facing is one of liability. Once work is done to any floodway, to any flood fringe, who is responsible for that liability? Is it going to be downloaded on the community? Is it going to be downloaded onto the municipality, the county, or does the province assume that liability because it's a provincial project?

Mr. Oberle: A curious line of questioning, Mr. Chair. I guess what the member is trying to get at is that if the province spends some money here, we're creating what could be quite a large liability. We could in fact do that if we in some way negligently planned or approved a project to be put on a waterway, which subsequently . . . [interjection] No, that could never happen.

The Chair: The member has the floor, hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: The member correctly points out that that could never happen, Mr. Chair. If, indeed, in the event that that could happen, that the province did somehow negligently construct or plan some facility, where later the facility itself caused damage, I guess there could be some liability owing. That, of course, would be determined in the court of law. But in actual fact what is happening here is that the province and municipalities in concert with a lot of planning and registered hydrologists and engineers and all the people that normally approve these plans have put out structures within streams or along stream banks that hopefully will prevent flooding. Some future flooding event doesn't create a liability there. It certainly creates future damage, and, as this one was, it would be covered by the federal disaster recovery program in accordance with the rules of the federal government.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Minister. Let me sort of narrow right down to the point here. The community of Sundre has roughly \$3.1 million, \$3.2 million. I'm not sure if it's the community of Sundre as much as it's the county of Mountain View that has been allocated the funds, and I'm not sure how much, if any, funds come from the federal government for a flood mitigation project. I'll let you determine – if someone could point me if it's in this estimate or if it was in last year's budget that still has not been spent.

The problem is this. The liability for a community, as the minister just points out, High River being a perfect example, is that it is the province as the last resort or the federal government. The community has been wiped out. What we have in the situation in Sundre is that we have the money allocated. It's there. They need to build a berm to protect against future flooding. It's been

designed, and SRD has been involved in this. One thing is holding it up. Nobody can answer the question as to who's going to be liable if somebody says: you built that berm, and that caused my property to be flooded out versus your property. The community is scared to death to move on building the berm, and it's driving me crazy because we know one thing is going to happen in this community. It's not if there's going to be a flood; it's when there's going to be a flood.

5:40

If we could start building – by the way, this berm is actually going on SRD land, so that's one of those issues. We can't resolve the liability issue to move forward so we can build this project when the money is there and it's allocated, and that's what I'm trying to drill down to right now. And when you answer that, if somebody could point out to me where that money – is it coming out of Municipal Affairs or ESRD? I think it's ESRD, but I'm not sure.

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

Mr. McIver: Mr. Chair, the hon. member I think is asking a good question in a way, but he's asking a question trying to assign liability to something that has not happened yet. I'm not sure you can assign liability to something that has not happened yet. While I think it's a terrific question, it's not necessarily a supplementary estimates question. I would hope, very respectfully . . .

The Chair: That's where I was going.

Mr. McIver: . . . would suggest that the member send a note to the minister with that question. I think it's a good question; I just don't think it's a supplementary estimates question. I would love to see you get your question answered in the appropriate arena.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, yes, you have another eight minutes, but if you wanted to focus more on the supplementary request, it might . . .

Mr. Anglin: I'll make my argument that it is a supplementary request because you do have a number of funds in the supplementary budget going to the same types of projects. That question that I've asked is: preventing a project from going forward. So you can allocate this money, but if that same issue of liability that plagues the community of Sundre plagues any of these other issues – allocating the money is fine, but you know as well as I do that building the project is what gets the job done. In other words, the completion is what provides the mitigation, not the money, although we need the money to build the project.

My concern is this: I'm looking at the various recovery projects and the money put forth to the various projects for flood mitigation, and what I want to see is the flood mitigation projects finished, particularly in the small towns. I'm going to use Sundre as my example. It is the liability of the unforeseen that's holding up the project, and I don't know how we deal with that, particularly in the smaller communities, to move forward so the projects get built. That's the key.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Oberle: In the event that some future flood condition causes damage to any property along the river, whether that damage was caused upstream because there's a berm downstream or anywhere else along that river, the landowner will be compensated like all the landowners that were flooded out – terrific damage in the 2013 flooding event – under the disaster recovery program. Beyond that,

the hon. member is asking for a legal interpretation of a hypothetical situation. Nobody in this Legislature can provide him with that.

He is also providing us with a specific example, a specific issue, in his constituency that specifically involves the Minister of ESRD, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. I would invite him to work proactively between his municipality and that minister to see if resolution can be brought to that issue. But, ultimately, if his municipality feels that they are at risk, I suspect they won't proceed with the project, and there's not much we can do about it. It's really not a discussion item for supplementary estimates.

Mr. Anglin: We'll move on. I think we beat this horse, and it's not moving anymore. Minister of Infrastructure, in dealing with the \$19 million floodway relocation program, how much of this money is designated, if you could tell me, to the Sundre area now that it has been remapped and people find themselves in the flood fringe, the floodway, and the various places where their property values have now dropped?

The Chair: Hon. minister, on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure can you provide that, or is that something you may have to get back to the member on?

Mr. McIver: The hon. member didn't give a page number or a line number, so if he could just give me that, that would give me a fighting chance to know what he's asking.

Mr. Anglin: I don't want to arm him, but page 42 under Infrastructure.

Mr. McIver: Thank you.

Mr. Anglin: It's the second-to-last bulleted item, \$19,956,000, and it's allocated for floodway relocation program. So what I'm looking for is: how much of that would be applicable to the community of Sundre now that the flood mapping has been done and the various individuals there have found themselves available for this?

Mr. Mandel: We don't have a specific breakdown of where it all went, so we will get back to you as to what it is when we talk to the minister.

The Chair: So you have a commitment on the record that that information if it's available will be provided to you.

Mr. Anglin: Okay.

The Chair: You can carry on for another four minutes and 24 seconds.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Could you assure me that at least Sundre qualifies for a part of or any or all of that money? I won't go for all of that money, but I want to make sure that the community of Sundre is qualified for that money. I really would like that answered.

Mr. Mandel: Well, I don't have that information, but I will also request that the Minister of Infrastructure – that's not a supplementary question. But, anyway, we will ask the minister and see if we can get an answer for you to that.

The Chair: Okay. You've got some more time, hon. member, unless you're finished.

Mr. Anglin: You read my mind, Mr. Chair. I am actually finished.

The Chair: Thank you.

This time is now available for government members should any government members choose to ask a question.

Seeing none, then I have to start the rotation over again, and I would start with the Official Opposition. If there are no members from the Official Opposition, then I would go to a member from the third party.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Yeah. Sure.

The Chair: You are up, sir.

Mr. Hehr: Well, then I'll keep asking. Here we go. Now, we have the Municipal Affairs minister here, so I'm looking at your budget. Can you tell me what, if any, of the budget money is allotted to flood recovery and how that money is distributed throughout the various jurisdictions and the like?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, with regard to page 50 of the supplementary estimates you see as it relates to flood recovery the \$1.358 million with that, and the disaster recovery program transformation is on there as well. Those deal with community flood mitigation projects in the High River area as well as can be seen on page 51. Are you okay, hon. member? Okay.

Mr. Hehr: Was any of that money going to Calgary and areas around there?

The Chair: To respond, hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Yeah. So specific to those ones, Mr. Chair, the Calgary ones were in the 2014-15 budget. This is not dealing with that piece. This is on the flood recovery piece. But the budget certainly does deal with it in the overall budget but in supplementary estimates does not. If you would like specifics with regard to Calgary, I'd be more than happy to follow up with you on that, and if you actually want to follow up with a specific question on that, I'm more than happy to help you.

Mr. Hehr: Okay. Then let's ask: where are we at? Is any of this money going out to speed up DRP claims or anything of that matter?

Mrs. McQueen: With regard to the DRP claims, first of all, with regard to appeals, as you know, we tripled our staff in October to deal with the appeals not just in Calgary, of course, but in all of the 2013 floods, to get those appeals completed. We had a target of completing them by the end of December, which we did.

Then we've added now another 15 staff members to deal with the DRP so that we could actually have caseworkers for files. What we did on the appeal side worked, so we wanted to make sure we now have caseworkers assigned to files. We have about 2,000 files left out of the 2013 floods. I think around 1,200-ish are in Calgary, but I could get you the exact number. What we've committed to is that by the end of June 2015 we would complete the majority of those cases if not all. Some of them may then go into an appeal hearing. They have the opportunity to appeal cases and appeal to myself, which goes to the Municipal Government Board, but we've added additional resources so that we can have staff as caseworkers to move these files along more quickly.

5:50

Mr. Hehr: So of these 1,200, would these be more complex cases that don't easily fit within a correct or an easy to solve area? I'm just trying to generalize here. Is it conflicting sort of views on floodway, flood path and what the legislation actually says it's going to fund and what is within the spirit of the rule and the actual rule itself? Is that sort of your understanding of where the last 1,200 claims are and why the necessary steps continuing on?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We had over 10,000 cases, 10,800 cases, in the 2013 disasters in southern Alberta. Of those, we have approximately 2,000 left. We've added those additional staff so that, two things, we can work quicker to resolve those for those people because we want to make sure that we're looking after their files but also take away some of the frustration – and since I've come on to the ministry, I've talked with people – so that they could have the same kind of a pod of caseworkers so that every time they pick up the phone, they're not dealing with someone separately.

The 2,000 that are left are some of the harder ones, and that's why we wanted a caseworker approach to help them through this process. We're also, with the caseworker approach, actually contacting people so that they know that we're doing this and doing everything we can so that we reduce these files by the end of June.

Mr. Hehr: Is any of this money that we're dealing with right now earmarked for some of the projects on either the Bow or the Elbow in terms of future flood mitigation on the capital side?

Mrs. McQueen: Any of the mitigation is through the Minister of ESRD, and the minister would be happy to answer those if you have questions related to that.

Mr. Hehr: Then I'll ask the Minister of ESRD. Is any money being asked for in this budget due to the upstream mitigation projects that are currently going on and being directed by the province?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Yes, that is. If you look in the ESRD budget under capital, there is 4 and a half million dollars for the Springbank off-stream reservoir project to help control the Elbow. You're asking specifically about the Elbow and the Bow?

Mr. Hehr: Yeah.

Mr. McIver: Okay. All right. There is a general flood recovery erosion program primarily to reinforce riverbanks. I guess I don't have anything from Calgary or from Elbow or Bow broken out of that. Again, \$3 million is for the watershed resiliency and restoration program, and I don't have that broken out. But the big project – of course, some of the Kananaskis golf course repairs will likely include the riverbanks in some of the riparian areas because, of course, the golf course bridges that. I think that is the answer to your question.

Mr. Hehr: Now, it appears that most of this money is operational. Can you explain why that is and the process of what that operational account looks like?

Mr. McIver: You know what? No. I can only tell you that on the operational side – you're talking about the Kananaskis golf course if I understand your question correctly.

Mr. Hehr: Yeah.

Mr. McIver: Okay. There is \$8 million there on the operational side to maintain the infrastructure and grounds during the rehabilitation of the course, and there are obviously costs involved in that. Then, I guess, if you're looking for specifically, you know, moving off of one hole and onto another, I don't have that order of detail here for you. But it's \$8 million for operating. Again, what is eligible from federal funding will be applied for and with a maximum of 90 per cent returned to the Alberta taxpayers, at the maximum. Up to 90 per cent is the correct terminology.

Mr. Hehr: I guess in terms of the flood mitigation projects going on along the Bow River side of things, you said you didn't have the details of where they are or what they're doing. Could I get that information?

Mr. McIver: We will ask the minister to provide you with that in whatever detail is available, sir.

Mr. Hehr: Okay.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Yeah. It's my understanding, too – and we can follow along in the paper, I guess – that there have been some new reports out that Bow River flooding could also happen in the future. I'm wondering if any of the money earmarked in this allotment that you're providing is going towards looking at any additional upstream mitigation projects that may have to go on in the Bow or anything of that nature.

Mr. McIver: Respectfully, Chair, the supplementary estimates are what the government has asked for money to do, not for what may be asked for in the future. While it's a great question, I think the hon. member might even agree with me that it's not necessarily a supplementary estimates question.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hehr: I have the hon. Minister of Health here, and I think I may have time for one question here before we run out of time. Line 12 is primary health care, addictions and mental health. There is a \$62 million cut to addictions and mental health, and that seems to me like a pretty severe reduction given the need. I don't think our gambling addiction rates are going down, nor are there any calls for fewer supports for mental health. Can you tell us what services will be closed or reductions that are going to happen in mental health as a result of this cut?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Yes. I'm just getting to my notes. The biggest reason for that is the family care clinics, the FCCs. We didn't go ahead with them, and that was the savings. So, really, it was in that category, but it was the family care clinics.

Mr. Hehr: It was money that was earmarked that you didn't spend.

Mr. Mandel: That we just didn't spend. It's in the category of primary care, mental health and addictions, but it really is for the family care clinics. We didn't spend the money.

Mr. Hehr: Okay. Was that money then transferred into any other projects on mental health or addictions counselling or things to that nature?

Mr. Mandel: It was offset into the overall need for surplus versus added needs for expenses as a result of increased costs.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you.

While I have the minister here, just an explanation. In line 7 human tissue and blood services is being cut by \$11 million. What part of the program is being cut? Can you explain that cut?

Mr. Mandel: The wording is a bit misrepresentative. The surplus is due to aggressive contract negotiations by Canadian Blood Services for the purchase of blood and blood products as well as an effective U.S. currency hedging initiative. So it's really a savings

because we got a better deal than what we budgeted for. We didn't actually cut buying any of it; we just got it for a less expensive price.

Mr. Hehr: It was just less, and you transferred it over. Okay.

Mr. Mandel: Yeah. And then it all went into this imbalance of what we spent versus what we saved.

Mr. Hehr: Okay.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but you can continue your line of questioning after.

The committee will now stand recessed until 7:30 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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