



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 8

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

Second Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. Guide us all in our deliberations and debate that we may determine courses of action which will be to the enduring benefit of our province of Alberta and of its citizens. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Anniversary of 2008 Provincial Election

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, today is one of those anniversaries that we would like to acknowledge. One year ago today, on this date, 31 members were elected to this Assembly for the first time, and two members were re-elected after a slight absence from the Assembly. I would like to acknowledge the hon. members for Calgary-North West, Edmonton-Glenora, Calgary-Elbow, Airdrie-Chestermere, Athabasca-Redwater, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Calgary-Egmont, Calgary-Mackay, Calgary-Montrose, Calgary-North Hill, Drayton Valley-Calmar, Edmonton-Calder, Edmonton-Decore, Edmonton-Ellerslie, Edmonton-Manning, Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-Meadowlark, Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Rutherford, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Lethbridge-West, Livingstone-Macleod, Red Deer-South, St. Albert, Strathcona, Strathmore-Brooks, West Yellowhead, Wetaskiwin-Camrose, Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-McCall, Edmonton-Strathcona, and the members for Cardston-Taber-Warner and Edmonton-Beverley-Clareview. March 3, 2009, is the one-year anniversary of your participation in this very esteemed body.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature 31 very special guests. They are from the Field home-schooling group. They are seated, I believe, in both galleries, but I know that there are a number in the members' gallery. They are accompanied today by teachers/group leaders Mrs. Kathy Ansell, Mrs. Paulette Field, Mrs. Patty Marler, Mrs. Lianne McDonald, Mrs. Michelle Flim, Mrs. Roxanne Theroux, and Mrs. Kimberly Walker. The students and parents had an opportunity to visit the Premier's office, and we had a very good, hearty discussion about the province of Alberta. I can tell you that we are in good hands. I know that the students participated in the mock Legislature and learned a lot about the operations of their government. Thank you so much. I'd ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 27 students and four leaders from Guthrie school, which is just north of Edmonton on the military base. They are led by their teachers Chris Layton and Becky Williams and their parent helpers Selina Robb and Rosita LaFrance. I'd like to thank them for coming today

and ask them to please rise and enjoy the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce the students from Eastwood school along with their teacher. I think they were in the Assembly yesterday as well. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Ken Kent, who is the president of Harley-Davidson of Edmonton. Ken was the first Canadian to run 200 miles per hour, or 320 kilometres per hour, in the quarter-mile top fuel motorcycle drag racing event in the States. He likes to ride fast, and he does that each year at IHRA, International Hot Rod Association, racing events throughout North America and the world. His local Harley-Davidson business on the Yellowhead and Fort Road is where I bought my first Harley, so I thank Ken for introducing me to the world of Harleys. Ken is seated in the members' gallery along with our friend Brady Whittaker. I'd ask Ken to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly two staff members from my department. I'm truly blessed to lead a department that is so passionate about education and research in our province. Here are two of our great staff members: Monica Pysko, human resources project assistant, and Simon Underwood, administrative assistant, human resources. They're taking part in the public service tour. They're seated in our public gallery, I believe, this afternoon, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Likewise, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 13 staff members from Sustainable Resource Development. They work in our lands division taking care of our public lands, two-thirds of this province, and dispositions related to its use. They, also, are on a public service orientation tour of the Legislature today. They are Christine Giurrissevich, Mel Palmeter, Kevin Ball, Susan McGillivray, Karen Scott, Lizette Kaba, Blair Stone, Barb Grunau, Kali Hennessey, Francine Duret, Rubena Hassan, Annette Krumm, and Donna Bambrick. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly five very special guests. They are registered social workers who are here to represent their profession as we recognize

National Social Work Week. Social workers are a compassionate and dedicated group of individuals who touch the lives of many Albertans and build brighter futures, and for that we thank them. They are sitting in the public gallery. I would ask the following people to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Lina Filomeno-Melchionna, representing the Alberta College of Social Workers; Sarah Banick, from our Didsbury office; Melissa Zimmer, from our Wetaskiwin office; Rhonda McKinnon, from the Edmonton and area CFSA; and Bailey Puchyr, from the Edmonton and area CFSA. Please join me in welcoming them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My friend and colleague from Calgary-Foothills alluded to it, and I wanted the House to specifically recognize our friend Brady Whittaker. On behalf of the forest industry, as executive director of the Alberta Forest Products Association he's working very hard to support a very troubled industry right now, and he's been a great friend to this Legislature.

#### 1:40 Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

#### Fallen Four Memorials

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Four years ago today, four brave young RCMP officers full of promise and hope were shot and killed near Mayerthorpe in the Whitecourt-St. Anne constituency. It was a terrible tragedy when the lives of constables Peter Schiemann, Leo Johnston, Anthony Gordon, and Brock Myrol were taken. Today my thoughts go to the families, friends, and co-workers of these four officers plus the communities in the Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt RCMP detachment areas, and all uniformed officers.

The Fallen Four Memorial Society in Mayerthorpe determined early that these communities will neither be defined nor defeated by the killings. They organize a yearly memorial candlelight ceremony to remember Brock, Anthony, Leo, Peter, plus all uniformed officers who have died in the line of duty across Canada. There is also a hockey game between the RCMP and the Mayerthorpe Wranglers to bring the communities together in a fun way to celebrate the once-vibrant lives of our four officers.

This year, unfortunately, the Mayerthorpe Arena burned down, but with some help from Northlands the memorial moved to Rexall Place on Sunday, March 1. It was a very special day, and I appreciated assisting our Solicitor General in the lighting of the centre candle for all peace and police officers and soldiers. Thank you also to the Member for Calgary-Hays for joining us that day. I congratulate the many volunteers from the Fallen Four Memorial Society, the Mayerthorpe Arena Operating Committee, minor hockey, the RCMP, Whitecourt Wolverines, and all donors. I also join the organizing committee in recognizing the generosity of the Edmonton Oilers, Oil Kings, Northlands, Rexall Place, and Ticketmaster.

To the families of Peter, Brock, Anthony, and Leo and to all of those who have lost a loved one who wears a uniform, I assure you that the brave are never forgotten.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [applause]

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

#### Setting the Direction for Special Education

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you. As chair of the Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta Steering Committee I would like to

use this opportunity to provide an update on this important initiative. Mr. Speaker, 3,500 Albertans contributed input towards a vision and principles for a new special education framework. They told us what parts of the current system worked well and shared visionary ideas that demonstrated a considerable appetite for change.

We're now entering phase 2 of Setting the Direction. On Saturday I had the pleasure of attending a consultation session in Red Deer, and today, as I speak, approximately 100 people in Medicine Hat are participating in the session. I would like to encourage all Albertans to contribute to this work. Phase 2 consultation can take place online, in person, or through a group or individual print submission. This phase of work is about engaging in even more challenging conversations about the elements required to build an inclusive education system.

Following the second round of consultations, recommendations for a new special education framework that includes policy, accountability measures, and a funding model will be developed. On behalf of my colleagues on the Setting the Direction Steering Committee I will present the framework to the Minister of Education at a forum to be held on June 8 and 9 in Edmonton. After the June forum is complete, I am confident that we will have a policy framework in place that will propose near-, mid-, and long-term challenges to build one inclusive education system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### Livestock and Meat Strategy

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to highlight the important work that has been accomplished under the Alberta livestock and meat strategy. The strategy was announced last June and is a framework designed to strengthen the industry and create a more profitable and competitive future.

One important component of the strategy is the agency itself. ALMA's role is to act as a catalyst, and it is responsible for implementing specific parts of the strategy. ALMA was created shortly after the announcement, has recently become incorporated, Mr. Speaker, and already it has created five industry advisory committees that will help guide their initiatives and ensure the livestock industry's input.

Another working group has been formed as well between Agriculture and Rural Development and the cattle industry that will play an important role in shaping the future of traceability initiatives. The group has already started developing a traceability implementation plan for 2010 and beyond. The creation of these working groups demonstrates this government's commitment to revitalizing the livestock industry. It also highlights the importance of industry consultation and involvement as the Alberta livestock and meat strategy is implemented. We all know that change is not easy, but there are already signs that we are on the right track. New markets are beginning to open to Canadian cattle; however, this access comes with the condition of age verification. Because Alberta's producers have been able to adapt to change and have begun age verifying animals – indeed, 83 per cent of the livestock has already been age verified, which is an incredible success, Mr. Speaker – we will be able to respond and take advantage of these opportunities as more borders open.

I encourage all members of our livestock and meat industry and all of my colleagues here to continue to support the strategy. I also want to thank the minister and the Premier for their clear vision and determination, that have shown that this is incredibly important and

that working with a progressive industry, Mr. Speaker, has had great successes, that are critical to the future success of the industry in our province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton–Gold Bar.

### Workplace Health and Safety

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is becoming a dangerous place for workers. Workplace fatalities in this province have risen 34 per cent in the last three years, yet the employment minister claims that our workplaces are safer today than they were in the past. The numbers are far too high. Last year there was an average of one workplace fatality per week. The government has not made sufficient progress in reducing accident rates. Immediate action is needed.

First, the government must create mandatory joint work-site health and safety committees. These committees, composed of representatives from labour and management, identify and resolve health and safety concerns in the work site. They conduct regular site inspections, accident investigations, and safety education programs, and they meet every month to assess workplace safety.

In Alberta employers are not legally obligated to form these committees. That needs to change.

Second, the government must amend the fact that it is not a legal requirement for employers to develop occupational health and safety policies or to post such a policy at the work site. A clear, well-communicated OH and S policy can save lives and prevent accidents. The government should require high-risk industries to create and communicate OH and S policies.

Finally, accident investigation reports should be admissible in court. The fact that they are not admissible shields wrongdoing and unsafe practices from exposure. Unsafe practices should be brought to light so that they can be corrected and further accidents can be prevented. Last year dozens of Alberta families were confronted with the horror and grief of the loss of a loved one due to an avoidable workplace-related death. This government is not doing enough to bring these numbers down. I urge the government to strongly consider the options we have discussed here today.

Thank you.

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

### Persons Case Scholarship Recipients

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On February 27 of this year the Alberta government announced that 27 Alberta students will receive financial assistance in their postsecondary studies through the Persons Case scholarship. I'm very proud to say that two of my constituents are among the recipients: Ms Barbara McLean, undertaking her master of arts in political science degree at the University of Alberta, and Ms Patricia Orizaga-Brocks, who is enrolled at Grant MacEwan College in the diploma in social work program.

Mr. Speaker, these scholarships were established in 1979 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Persons Case victory. In 1929 Alberta's Famous Five – Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby – successfully led the landmark legal case in which the British Privy Council confirmed that women in Canada were eligible to be called to the Senate and therefore qualified as persons under the law. This year marks the 80th anniversary of that monumental decision.

The Persons Case scholarships are awarded each year to students whose studies and career goals will ultimately contribute to the advancement of women or to those who are studying in fields where members of their gender are traditionally few in number. Mr. Speaker, this year the government was pleased to announce that the scholarships' total funding increased from \$20,000 to \$100,000 annually.

On behalf of all members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all recipients of the scholarship and thank them for their continued contribution to life in Alberta.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Oil Royalty Agreement

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the release that Canadian Oil Sands Trust put out last year when Syncrude signed on to the new royalty system, the company states that their after-tax future net profits will go up 12 per cent as a result. Syncrude signed the royalty deal, and the sum of money is vast, over \$18 billion extra to Syncrude on top of already projected \$153 billion profits. To the Premier: why did the Premier sign this deal that costs Albertans so much?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, to take us back to the royalty review, we had made a commitment that we would not tear up any Crown agreements that were made back in 1997. In fact, the opposition there asked us not to, and we didn't do that. We honoured those agreements. Both companies came to the table, and we renegotiated. As the minister said yesterday, we're actually getting more money from the development in the oil sands.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A government that was managing this resource in the public interest would have numbers, and they would have told Albertans what it's costing us. What about the Suncor deal, Mr. Premier? Did we lose more than the equivalent of our heritage trust fund in that agreement as well?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday when this question came up, I made the comment: how did you come up with the figure of \$18 billion 40 years out if no one – no one – as little as seven months ago predicted this whole economic downturn around the globe?

**Some Hon. Members:** We did.

**Mr. Stelmach:** I hear across the way: oh, we did. Wow, they must have done it and kept it very secret because, you know, there wasn't one economist in the world. So all of these figures that are being bandied around today are projections. I can't tell you, Mr. Speaker, 40 years from now what the price of oil will be, but I do know the agreement we have, especially the ability to keep some of the bitumen in kind. We'll be able to process that here in Alberta, and we can also sell it to other countries, not only to the United States. We might have other markets.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, these are public documents Canadian Oil Sands Trust put out to their shareholders in trust. They did their homework. The question is whether this government is doing its homework.

Since the Premier yesterday did not give figures about what the deals are going to cost Albertans, is he saying that the government signed away these billions without working out the implications, or is the Premier hiding from Albertans the scale and the scope of this giveaway?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader is referring to an agreement that was signed in 1997. When we renegotiated the agreement over a year ago, all of the information was made public in terms of how both companies came to the table and what the new agreement is, and that was communicated to the public.

**The Speaker:** Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Royalty Reporting

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, again, this was put out just last year, 12 months ago. Canadian Oil Sands put out the information because they have to update their shareholders, the owners of the company. But the government of Alberta, which manages the oil sands on behalf of the owners, Albertans, does not provide even remotely adequate information on such deals. To the Premier: why do Albertans have to go through corporate filings to get this information? Why isn't the government reporting openly, transparently, to the owners of the resource, Albertans?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I believe we continue to be the only jurisdiction in Canada that legally has to issue quarterly reports – that's on our revenue stream and our expenses – and we're proud to do that. That is the best, I think, information stream that there is in Canada. We'll continue to do that. Also, we're able to predict to a degree what the next three months will be in terms of some either unanticipated price increases or when the price keeps dropping on our resources. It's very concise. It's information that is available to all of the public, and I believe the public is satisfied with the kind of information we're giving them.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, the Royalty Review Panel, the Auditor General, even Peter Valentine told this government that their royalty reporting was weak and inadequate. Why has their advice to fix this serious failing continued to be ignored?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we are not ignoring any advice. In fact, before the Auditor General talked about the royalty process that we have in place, we already undertook the royalty review in the province, and we followed it up, of course. Coming from the panel was some advice in terms of how we can improve the system and also from the Auditor General. That's why Mr. Peter Valentine, who is a former Auditor of Alberta, was asked to review. He came up with a report, and we're following all the recommendations.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an example where clearly they haven't been following the recommendations. When will the government fix the broken royalty reporting system and start providing Albertans, the owners of this resource, with comprehensive, detailed, transparent information on their natural resource royalties?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we are. But as I said before, following the new royalty framework, there will be a new information system put in place to capture all of the necessary information to ensure that

we are collecting the royalties on the right volumes that are produced by oil and gas producers. Of course, the oil sands agreement is different from the conventional oil and gas. It is a complex area, but we're doing whatever we can to make the information clear and concise to the shareholders, which are all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Blue Cross Premiums

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Starting this July the premiums for Albertans, singles and families, with Blue Cross coverage will increase, and by July 2010 the premiums will be three times what they are now. To the minister of health. This minister is making changes to Blue Cross premiums so that they're more comparable to private insurance. This could be interpreted as the direction the rest of Albertans' health care changes will go. Do Albertans not have the right to worry about the direction of increased comparisons to private health care?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the member is purposely trying to put words in my mouth, because there was never a comparison to private health care. What we did say was that the Blue Cross program that we offer to all Albertans needs to more clearly be aligned with employer-based plans because currently, today, we have a situation where a number of plans that employees have with their employer cost significantly more than the government plan does, and that's inequitable. The taxpayer should not be subsidizing that.

**Ms Pastoor:** Will the minister agree that by making this change to Blue Cross premiums, private health insurance may look like the better option for Albertans, making them decide to opt for private health insurance?

**Mr. Liepert:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is having some difficulty understanding the situation because what I just said was that the private-sector employers in this province and, quite frankly, public-sector employers have insurance plans, benefit plans, that are aligned with the Blue Cross plan, which is provided to those who do not have employer benefit plans. The only difference in the two is the amount of premiums that are paid.

**Ms Pastoor:** Many letters and e-mails that are coming to my office say that there is as much public concern about Alberta's Blue Cross premiums as there has been about the seniors' pharmaceutical change. Will the minister commit to re-evaluating the change to Blue Cross like he has for the seniors' pharmaceutical change?

2:00

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if this particular member and that particular party want to campaign in the next election on the fact that the taxpayers of this province should be subsidizing a Blue Cross plan which has premiums that are less than those of employer plans, let them go ahead. The problem is that this particular member and members of that particular party never tell the truth when it comes to how these plans work.

**Ms Blakeman:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I think we're definitely going to have – no. As a matter of fact, I want to deal with this right now.

### Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, would you retract what you just said?

**Mr. Liepert:** I'll retract that statement, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

### Election Commitments

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's a year after the election, and it's report card time. Today an evaluation of this government's performance gives them a failing grade. The Premier promised to stop shipping raw bitumen and jobs to the U.S. One year later this government has failed. Will the Premier stand here today and explain why he has failed to keep his promise and why he continues to ship bitumen and the jobs of Albertans to the United States?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I hope he said "ship" bitumen.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our record over this past year. We've completed Canada's first land-use framework. We've undertaken this past year in Infrastructure the most kilometres of highway repaved in the last at least dozen years that I'm aware of, maybe even 15 years. We've made tremendous progress with our aboriginal community in signing a first-time agreement with the three treaties. We have accomplished a lot, and in the next question I'll be able to tell him how much more we've accomplished.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This Premier promised to renegotiate deals with Suncor and Syncrude to keep a fair share of royalties for Albertans. Instead, we have a massive increase of \$18 billion going to Syncrude alone. One year later this government has failed. Why did this government fail to stand up to two of the most profitable operations in the world to get a fair share for Albertans?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said before in previous questioning, the agreement is fair. It was a Crown agreement that was signed in 1997. We said that we were not going to tear up those agreements, and we kept our word. We have renegotiated those agreements. You know, finally, across Canada, especially after today's poll, all Canadians are realizing that the oil sands are very, very important to the economic well-being of not only Alberta but the rest of Canada, and that speaks a lot for what we've done in this great province to support the economy of Canada.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just over a year ago this Premier said, "Our government will invest \$300 million for 600 new beds . . . in seven new long-term care centres across the province." Just 11 months later they admitted that the number of long-term care beds will remain at the current number of 14,500 for the next several years. Once again this government has failed a year later. Will the Premier stand up today and explain to all Albertans why he has failed to create a single new long-term bed?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member has his information a bit mixed up. We're continuing to construct housing for seniors. I know that there's a propensity by that party there to institutionalize seniors. That is not what we want to do. We want to give our seniors a good quality of life in their last years, so we are increasing support for home care. We are providing options in housing, and these are the kinds of options that are going to improve the quality of life and have our seniors, the seniors that helped build this province, enjoy their last few years in comfort.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Home Renovation Contractors

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new federal home renovation tax credit has many Albertans thinking about renovating their homes this year to make the most of tax savings. This is certainly good news that will help keep people working in our province. Unfortunately, there are some contractors who see this as an opportunity to take advantage of consumers. My questions are for the Minister of Service Alberta. How is the government protecting Alberta consumers from contractors who may try to take advantage of them?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly true that a lot of Albertans are considering home renovations. Before signing a contract with a renovator, people should first get written estimates from more than one contractor, and after choosing a renovator, they should get a written contract with all the necessary details listed. As well, any contractor who takes payments in advance must be listed by Service Alberta as a prepaid contractor. They also must pass a criminal record check and provide monetary security. Consumers considering hiring a prepaid contractor can call us to find out if a contractor is licensed or not.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. It's fine to have rules in place, but they're only good if enforced. What is the government doing to make sure that contractors are following these regulations?

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Service Alberta is very active in enforcing the laws and helping Albertans when someone takes advantage of them. Since 2003 we have dealt with more than 1,000 files regarding prepaid contractors. We have recovered nearly \$1.3 million for consumers who have been wronged by prepaid contractors. The courts have also fined prepaid contractors more than \$225,000 under the Fair Trading Act.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you. My final question to the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure that Alberta consumers are aware of their rights when hiring a contractor?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While most contractors are indeed trustworthy and responsible, we want to warn Albertans

about the risks and what they can do to protect themselves. We have a lot of good information. Our website includes tipsheets on choosing contractors for home renovations. We also have news releases warning consumers on a regular basis. We have also information booths at many of the renovation trade shows. There is good protection in place, but I would encourage all Albertans to do their homework and choose a contractor very carefully.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

### School Bus Safety

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A tragedy involving a child causes everyone to question how to prevent it from happening again. It is within this government's control to ensure that standards are in place to protect children who take the bus to school. To the Minister of Transportation: will the minister implement legislation that requires school buses to drop off children at their driveways rather than putting them at risk by having to cross the secondary highways?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, any time that we have an accident or a fatality involving a child, it's very, very heart-wrenching for everyone involved. We did have a fatality by Millarville recently, and my heart goes out to that family. I don't know all of the exact details about what happened there, but we are investigating within our highway Traffic Safety Act, and we will do what's necessary.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education: how will the minister be working with the school boards to implement best practices for school bus safety?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall, with our cooperation the Ministry of Transportation did a bus safety report. It had a number of recommendations with respect to what could be done with school buses to make sure that they were visible to drivers. I can say that I have met with superintendents and chairs of boards across the province, and I've always emphasized bus safety as part of our discussions. In the end it comes down to drivers on the road being careful and being aware that at certain times of the day our buses are out with our children and that we should be paying attention to the fact that buses are out there with our children. We need to be more careful on our roads.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: will the minister specifically target funding to school boards to address school bus safety concerns?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Transportation may wish to address this because he has graciously indicated to boards that his department would provide some of the funding necessary to outfit buses in accordance with the report that was prepared. That work is ongoing. In fact, some school boards have been ahead of the game in that process in terms of making sure that the reflector tapes and the strobe lights and those sorts of things have

already been installed on their buses. Yes, funding has been provided through the Ministry of Transportation to accommodate that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### 2:10 Nanotechnology

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In May of 2007 this government announced the Alberta nanotechnology strategy aimed at capturing a share in the world's nanotechnology market. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Why has this government chosen to invest in nanotechnology?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, the government chose to invest in nanotechnology based on a partnership with our federal government partners in the National Institute for Nanotechnology. Nanotechnology is what they call platform technology that crosses a number of different disciplines. In Alberta, obviously, we're interested in environmental impacts, energy and alternative energies, health, imaging. All of these things are part of what nanotechnology can build in this province. That's why we're very, very interested in that world market.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister. As part of this strategy this government announced their investment in the National Institute for Nanotechnology and the Alberta Centre for Advanced MNT Products, or ACAMP. How do these two organizations differ, or how do they complement one another?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, NINT, as I mentioned, is the partnership between the provincial government and the federal government and really has a national connection. It's the institute, if you will, that is going to do the research on building nanosystems, on materials that can be constructed from nanomaterials. ACAMP, or the advanced micronanotechnology products institute, is really to take the research that NINT develops and turn it into a package that our entrepreneurs can commercialize in this province, turn it into a wealth generator of business here in the province of Alberta.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental to the same minister: how do we plan to ensure that Alberta remains a world leader in nanotechnology?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's all about partnerships. Even today at a Prion Research Institute meeting with a number of my colleagues from the Legislature we were talking partnerships. Nanotechnology is no different. We are attracting world-class researchers who have connections around the globe. We're investing in the infrastructure that is critical to nanotechnology. We now have companies that graduate students can work for in our province. So as you build the cluster here in the province, you build the economy around nano. You also build those products and services that are related to it, and that provides for sustainable economic development.

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



### Secondary Ticket Sales

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the spring I raised my concern that this government does not protect ticket buyers, artists, and stagehands from Ticketmaster's scheme on Internet and secondary sales. Since then governments in the U.S. and Canada have both convened inquiries and have introduced legislation on this issue. My questions are to the Minister of Service Alberta. What steps has the minister taken since the spring to protect Alberta ticket buyers, artists, and stagehands from Ticketmaster's scheme of secondary sales?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to this whole issue Service Alberta is monitoring it on a daily basis. Protecting consumers is very important. When the act is proclaimed – indeed, that is going to be happening. The legislation that we have in place, the Fair Trading Act, does protect consumers, but we are monitoring it on a daily basis because of the ongoing cases that are before the courts.

**Ms Blakeman:** No, it doesn't protect them, and my question to the minister is: why? When it has the chance to protect its citizens, to protect ticket buyers, to protect artists, and to protect stage workers, why won't this government step up and protect them?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, we are stepping up. We've got Bill 18, that has yet to be proclaimed, that will indeed do what the hon. member is asking for. In the meantime, ticket selling and scalping of tickets is illegal, and when that Bill 18 is proclaimed, we'll be addressing the issues that the hon. member mentions.

**Ms Blakeman:** So the minister wants us to rely for protection on a bill that has not yet been proclaimed. How is that protecting ticket buyers in Alberta, artists in Alberta, and stagehands in Alberta? You haven't even proclaimed the legislation. It does not protect them.

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that as the hon. member who has been in this House a lot longer than I have knows, everything doesn't work as quickly as we would like, but we'll take time, and when the bill is proclaimed, then we will have the protection that you are looking for.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

### Regionally Produced Construction Products

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, the forest products companies of Alberta have fought a valiant fight to stay afloat in these trying economic times. Commodity lumber prices have never been lower, yet the industry has never asked for direct support. With the limits of the softwood lumber agreement the best thing we can do to help is to buy lumber. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Can you please tell me what the government of Alberta is doing to ensure that the wood used in GOA construction projects is sourced from Alberta mills?

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

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the hon. member. Albertans, their businesses, their jobs, and Alberta's forestry industry are at the heart of our province, and we must

support them where we can. In 2006 Alberta Infrastructure actually incorporated a clause into its design guidelines that encourages the use of Alberta forestry products, and using the wood certification system is recognized in Alberta. It's important to note that we must comply also, though, with building codes in the construction of our facilities. While wood products may be suitable for many projects, we have to follow the codes in other areas.

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

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. What is the government of Alberta doing to ensure that the maximum amount of wood possible is being used in government of Alberta construction projects?

**Mr. Hayden:** Well, Mr. Speaker, my ministry is committed to environmentally sustainable standards in our building, and government of Alberta construction projects find that using the LEED environmental design standards is one way to meet that commitment. Through our LEED guidelines we put a strong emphasis on the use of regionally produced materials for construction such as wood. The more local products you use, the more credits you get for the LEED standard. We use regional materials to minimize the energy emissions related to the transportation of products.

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

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is to the same minister. Will you commit to using wooden framing materials for the interior partitions of the federal building renovation?

**Mr. Hayden:** Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, building codes require us to use steel studs in the framing construction of interior walls for structures like the federal building. As part of our efforts to recycle materials, the existing wood trim within that building is going to be saved and restored and reused.

Wood is extensively used in many of our projects throughout the province. A couple of recent examples are the Royal Tyrrell Museum, their field station, and the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation in Slave Lake.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

### Public-private Partnerships for School Construction

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the Minister of Infrastructure stated that the government's failure to disclose P3 school contract details benefits "Albertans, the taxpayers, the people that are paying for this." Albertans, especially during these penny-pinching times, want to know how much of their money will be used to pay for the 18 P3 schools. They also want to know how much of their children's money will have gone to pay for these schools over the next 32 years. The competition is over. The contract has been signed. To the Minister of Education: whose private interests are your ministries protecting, and why?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has dedicated itself to making information available to its citizens, but it also has in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act specific protections for commercial information. The P3 project with respect to phase 1 is not a one-off. There are other opportunities for people

to build in this province, and when they build in this province, when they bid on jobs in this province, they want to know that their commercial information, their competitive information, is protected. So it's very clear that in a commercial contract certain pieces of information are not made public.

**Mr. Chase:** Alberta taxpayers could well be on the hook for bailing out the failing Australian consortium of Babcock & Brown, the main P3 lenders for this project. Given that according to a recent study, a P3 in British Columbia will cost taxpayers 130 per cent more than it would have had they followed traditional building methods, will the minister commit to releasing the actual costs of building and maintaining the 18 schools?

2:20

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's premise is absolutely wrong. Babcock & Brown Australia has nothing whatsoever to do with the P3 project in Alberta, and there would be no circumstance in which taxpayers in Alberta will bail out Babcock & Brown in Australia.

**Mr. Chase:** The minister stood with me in southwest Calgary when the lender Babcock & Brown's initial financing was announced, so how he can deny that connection is news to me. I guess it's more of the secrecy associated with the deal.

Without knowing what the details are of this particular P3 contract, we have no way to know if taxpayers are getting a deal or being hosed. Will this minister commit to transparency and release how much these schools will actually cost taxpayers, and if it's not Babcock & Brown, if they've been erased, who is it?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member indicates that he was standing beside me. Clearly, he had his earmuffs and his blinders on. The information that was released showed directly what the relationship was between Babcock & Brown in England and the consortium partners that are operating the consortium in Canada, and if he looked at it, he'd have seen that there is no relationship. There is a very small relationship between Babcock & Brown Australia and Babcock & Brown Britain that has absolutely no impact on the contracts in Alberta and no exposure or risk to the taxpayer of Alberta. He would also have known, had he been listening at that particular time, because we did include him in the process and he was there – he could have heard if he'd been listening – that the funding was put in place prior to the contract being started. Again, there is no risk to the taxpayer of Alberta from that particular partner.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay.

### Election Commitments

*(continued)*

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to this government's report card. A year ago today everyday Albertans went to the polls hoping for a government that would take climate change seriously and actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One year later this government has failed. Alberta is alone in the world in relying on intensity targets that encourage the increase of greenhouse gas emissions. To the Minister of Environment: will you stand up today and explain why you are still letting Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions rise for at least the next 30 years?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is clearly committed to reducing greenhouse gases. [interjection] I remind the

hon. member that intensity targets are related to global experience, not individual operators. [interjection] So for each of the 100 large industrial emitters in this province our legislation remains the only legislation of its kind in North America that has legislated mandatory reductions of CO<sub>2</sub>. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you made a couple of interjections. Your colleague made a couple of interjections. Are we clear now? Are you okay now? Have you finished everything, or do you have some more questions now?

**Ms Notley:** I do.

**The Speaker:** You do have a question.

**Ms Notley:** Yes, I do.

**The Speaker:** To the hon. colleague sitting right beside you, you listen to what your colleague says, okay?

**Mr. Mason:** Oh, I do, Mr. Speaker. I do.

**Ms Notley:** There's a reason why there's only one jurisdiction on the continent that has it: because it doesn't work, your particular code.

Anyway, the government also promised everyday Albertans it would invest \$2 billion in green transit. One year later this government has failed. Instead, the government cut and run. They got a fast headline, and they axed the Green TRIP program. They're failing to create new jobs, and they're failing to take any cars off the road. To the Transportation minister: why won't you stop failing Albertans and follow through on your promise?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister. [interjections] Hon. minister, you've been recognized.

**Mr. Ouellette:** You know, I don't know where you're getting statements like saying that we've axed the Green TRIP. It's straight imagination somewhere that people dream these things up. In fact, last Friday we were in Calgary meeting with the Calgary Regional Partnership, and we talked all about Green TRIP. You know what? Stay tuned to budget day, and you'll find out how much we're going to spend on it this year.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, \$2 billion to \$200 million is what most people would call axing.

Last spring many motherhood statements were made about protecting Alberta's children. One year later this government has failed. They've failed to create enough child care spaces for working Alberta families. They've failed to protect children in care from abuse. They've failed to take the Child and Youth Advocate from under its thumb. To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: how can you justify your government's repeated failure to meet the needs of children throughout Alberta?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased, actually, to address this. You're right: one of our promises was to create child care spaces. I can tell you that between April 1 and February 20 we created over 5,900 spaces. We helped 148 communities create spaces. I've got all kinds of statistics. Currently we have 2,500 people registered in our online orientation course.

### Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Initiative

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta nonprofit and voluntary sector initiative was officially announced in 2007 with commitment from the government of Alberta and the sector to forge ongoing dialogue and enhance collaboration. I have spoken previously about the roles, challenges, and contributions of this third sector in our modern-day society. My question is to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. Would you please tell us what has taken place under this initiative? What key developments have taken place under this initiative since the announcement was made on the project charter?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, this is a groundbreaking initiative as for the first time we are talking directly to this sector about challenges and opportunities and how we can face them together. This sector is important to all Albertans and to our government. The purpose of the framework is to engage the government of Alberta and the not-for-profit and voluntary sector in a collaborative effort to discuss matters of mutual interest. Some of the activities currently under way are developing a comprehensive knowledge database of the Alberta not-for-profit and voluntary sector, 19,000 organizations, which we didn't have, implementing a workforce strategy for the nonprofit and voluntary sector, and co-ordinating discussions between the sector and funders looking at the impact of the current economic climate and how it affects the sector.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** What will the minister do to ensure this important sector has the capacity and resources to continue to support our communities and vulnerable citizens in these challenging economic times?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, the work we are doing to help the nonprofit and voluntary sector make it through these economic times is not just in our ministry. Working collaboratively with several other ministries of interest, the comprehensive database that I mentioned will help us to identify the needs that exist in the different subsectors, whether it be sports, whether it be faith-based organizations, whether it be social or arts and cultural organizations. The workforce strategy will help the sector attract and retain the people they need, and discussions are not limited to the government alone. We're talking with all different people, and that just goes on top of the different programs that we have that are available for funding.

### Seizure of Illegal Firearms in Vehicles

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, I've heard from members of law enforcement and legal practitioners, and they have told me they are unable to get convictions in instances when illegal firearms are found in vehicles. The people charged simply deny that the gun was theirs. Accordingly, can the Minister of Justice explain how the victims of crime legislation will work against gangbangers in a rental car or a stolen car with illegal firearms therein when they deny ownership and knowledge of the guns being there?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This legislation is two months old. We've been working with the police on this. We believe that as the police begin to make investigations with respect to these circumstances, they'll have perfect opportunities under the Criminal Code to charge these people with appropriate violations.

**Mr. Hehr:** That's contrary to what my people who are working in those institutions tell me. [interjections] Well, thank you.

It is common knowledge that oftentimes these gangbangers are generally young individuals, not the criminal masterminds of an organization. Given that these individuals probably have no assets to take under the victims of crime legislation, what will be their punishment in Alberta?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to speculate or make presumptions about whether or not people that are committing criminal acts may or may not hold property. The intention of this act is to seize property, to seize instruments of crime, to seize property that is likely to be used as an instrument of crime, and to sell it to compensate victims. If we spend the next three months in this Legislature trying to come up with every particular scenario that may or may not work, we might as well all be back in law school again.

2:30

**Mr. Hehr:** I think it is wonderful legislation as well, and I applaud the minister for implementing it. However, we're not talking about something hypothetical. We're talking about guns on the streets and that people are dying in constituencies like mine. How can we close this apparent loophole that is present in your bill, which again I applaud?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, this government does not need to be lectured on what's going on in the streets and in communities across this province. We are taking steps under safe communities legislation. We have passed legislation that has been asked for by the police within six months to take action against what is going on. It is wrong for us in this Legislature to be debating and to be crying out about the panic in the streets. We know what's going on. We're responding to it, we're doing it in partnership with the police and with Crown prosecutors, and we're having an impact.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Carbon Capture and Storage

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Carbon capture and storage is a popular subject around the water cooler and in the media these days for good reason. Some are questioning why we are continuing with such a significant investment in a time of financial uncertainty. Others are focused on the proposals of President Obama to spend \$2.5 billion on carbon capture. Now, my question is to the Minister of Environment. How is the province justifying spending \$2 billion in such a narrow field when the world's fiscal situation is so uncertain?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the simple answer is that if it was the right thing to do prior to an economic downturn, it's still the right thing to do during an economic downturn. The purpose of this investment is to contribute our efforts that will lead to real reductions in CO<sub>2</sub>, real effects on global efforts related to climate change.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My support of carbon capture and storage is because it's a very economical thing to do in terms of the payback that we will be getting, but there are

questions around what impact CCS will have in reducing emissions in the oil sands. I, unfortunately, read a recent media report that the potential capture rate for the oil sands is possibly as low as 10 per cent. How does the minister respond to these statements?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the report that the member refers to was perhaps based on the past and forgetting about the future. Let's not forget that the future of oil sands is not in the giant mines that everyone associates with oil sands today, but it's in situ. There are huge opportunities for CCS for in situ operations. There are huge opportunities for the application of CCS at the upgrader level, at the refinery level. There are a myriad of ways that CCS will apply not only to electrical energy but also to oil sands within Alberta. Our estimates – and we stand by them – are that there should be application of CCS for anywhere from 60 to 70 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from oil sands operations.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental to the same minister. The Americans are expected to come out with aggressive climate change policies soon that could have an impact on Alberta. In fact, the federal Minister of the Environment is in Washington as we speak to discuss the U.S.-Canada clean energy dialogue. Why is the province putting its eggs in the carbon capture and storage basket if we don't yet know what is going to come out of the U.S.?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has not been waiting for the U.S. to get engaged in this file. We've been actively involved in CCS and the climate change file now for quite some time. It's encouraging for us to see that the Obama administration is now working towards, among other things, the application of technology. It's also encouraging to us that there is an agreement between our national government and the U.S. national government to engage in a North American dialogue that will eventually lead to the application of much-needed technology in this field.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

#### Employment Insurance Benefit Program

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In December 2008 only 1 in 4 unemployed Albertans was eligible to receive EI benefits. My first question is to the minister of employment. Will the hon. minister support the Official Opposition to request the federal government to change the EI rules for Alberta by lengthening the benefit period and reducing the barriers to qualify for EI benefits?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As labour ministers, the ministers responsible for employment in Canada, we don't need to rely on the opposition to move forward with our work. We're continuously working with our federal counterparts to make sure that the employment benefits are applicable to Alberta. We've made some suggestions to our federal counterparts and are continuing to work with them to assure ourselves that benefits come to Albertans.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that the unemployment level for construction workers in this province is now over 9 per cent, the unemployment level for young people is over 9 per cent, how can the province work with the federal government to increase job skills training through the EI benefits program?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, we've got a number of agreements that have been signed with the federal government, and those agreements were signed a year ago and are being added to as we speak. The intent of those particular agreements is to provide ongoing training, ongoing support to those individuals who are losing their jobs. It's always sad to hear of individuals losing their particular positions, but our mandate is to help them try to find additional work experiences, additional training and to try to move them on to other jobs that they might be suitable to do.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Speaking of finding work, Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: will the minister organize a job fair – it's something you're very good at – in Borger, Texas, to showcase the skills of the unemployed construction workers here in Alberta who specialize in heavy industrial construction so that they can participate in the boom that's going on in Texas with the upgrader construction? We're exporting our bitumen, building the upgraders in Texas. That's where the jobs are. Will you go to those places?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I think we're doing our best to make sure that Albertans are working. You know, to go where this particular member is going, I don't believe that his comments are worthy of additional responses.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

#### Municipal Sustainability Initiative

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The municipal sustainability initiative is an unprecedented program, to the tune of \$1.4 billion if I recall correctly. This MSI funding assists municipalities to manage growth and also long-term planning and sustainability. My question today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. How does the government ensure the MSI dollars are spent effectively on high-priority projects?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to supporting municipalities. The province has set project categories: transit, underground infrastructure, roads and bridges, police and emergency facilities, recreation and cultural facilities like libraries. Municipalities decide what the projects should be on their priorities. Municipalities are accountable to their ratepayers.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same hon. minister. My constituents in Calgary-Fort would like to know how much money Calgary has received under MSI and some of the projects that have been funded.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, MSI is having a real impact on helping municipalities plan. Calgary has received \$270 million.

The mayor in his State of the City address at noon today stated that one of the centrepieces of the Calgary infrastructure program is the west leg of the LRT. Fifty-four million dollars of that expansion comes from MSI. MSI helps build strong communities each and every day.

2:40

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

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental question is to the same hon. minister. My constituents also would like to know if the provincial MSI program will be affected by the decrease in public revenue due to the current downturn of the economy.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, April 7 is budget day. I would like to say to the hon. member that at that time we will reveal the ministry's budget, but I want to stress that this government will continue to support municipalities, as it has in the past.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the question period. There were 94 exchanges today. In 30 seconds from now we will continue with our Routine. I'll recognize the last of six members to participate in Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Business Awards of Distinction

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to draw attention to some of Alberta's top businesses that were honoured last Friday during the 18th annual Alberta business awards of distinction. The event was hosted by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce and featured awards spotlighting the exceptional achievements of 10 businesses.

The evening's most prestigious honour was the Premier's award of distinction, presented by the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Premier's award went to Rogers Insurance of Calgary for its innovative human resources strategies.

Other winners included Muskwa Productions & Consulting of Tsuu T'ina for the aboriginal woman entrepreneur award; Hy-Tek Computer Sales and Service Ltd. of Rocky Mountain House for the aboriginal youth entrepreneur award; Frito Lay Canada of Lethbridge for the diversity leadership award; Canada Safeway Limited of Calgary for the employer of persons with disabilities award; Good Earth Coffeehouse and Bakery of Calgary for the employer of youth award; Mathieu Hryniuk of Peace River for the small business award; Spindle, Stairs & Railings of Calgary for the marketing award; ESS Support Services of Calgary for the aboriginal relations best practice award; and last but not least, Samson Management Ltd. of Hobbema for the aboriginal relations eagle feather award.

I'd like to ask all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the winners of these awards for their exceptional performance.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Stevens:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Premier it's my pleasure to table copies of the Alberta's Promise annual report.

This report summarizes the fifth year of this project's activities and highlights the achievements of our Promise partners.

Today 1,164 service organizations, businesses, and communities throughout the province are working together to do more for Alberta's children as partners in Alberta's Promise. The work of our dedicated Promise partners over the past five years has resulted in many outstanding success stories that have had a positive impact on the lives of Alberta children and youth. I know the hon. members will enjoy reading about these activities and achievements. The annual report is also available at [www.albertaspromise.org](http://www.albertaspromise.org).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit.

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission annual review for April 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of the responses to motions for returns 10 and 11, both asked for by the Member for Calgary-Varsity on October 20, 2008.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you may recall, on February 19 I rose pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) to speak to the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose's response to the throne speech. In doing so, I rose with my BlackBerry and I quoted from it, which was from a page from the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose's Facebook. I have a copy that I'm tabling with you, which is a quote dated the same day, February 19 – it's on page 3 for this House's reference – and which I'll pass to the page. I trust that this will conclude this new chapter in the history of this Assembly. I'm proud to do so, to make some sort of history, however small, being referenced as a young gun.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table a number of working-short reports. These forms are to draw attention to the issues of short-staffing in extended facilities. I have several to table which indicate in many cases that baths, in particular, and urgent personal care for residents of long-term care facilities were not provided as a result of short-staffing those facilities.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is Evaluation of Public Private Partnerships in B.C., the 130 per cent cost overrun which I referenced in my question. I'm very grateful to the Auditor General for looking into the 18 P3 schools.

My second tabling. This past week my wife and I had the pleasure of attending the updated, augmented Alberta Ballet's production of Joni Mitchell's and Jean Grand-Maitre's creative collaboration of *The Fiddle and the Drum*. The ballet dealt with the troublesome themes of war and environmental degradation but, true to Alberta tradition, ended on a note of hope and possibility.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Liepert, Minister of Health and Wellness, pursuant to the Public Health Act the Public Health Appeal Board annual report 2008 and pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta Dental Association and College 2008 annual report, the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta 2008 annual report, and the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta annual report 2007-2008.

### Calendar of Special Events

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this will be the first opportunity in the month of March, basically, to talk about what events will be celebrated this month, but prior to that, a few comments with respect to the year 2009 as members oftentimes wish to stand up in Members' Statements to do recognitions.

The year 2009 is the International Year of Reconciliation, the International Year of Astronomy, the International Year of Human Rights Learning, and the International Year of Natural Fibres. It's the Year of the Ox in the Chinese zodiac. It's the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. It's the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It's the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa. It deals with the United Nations Literacy Decade, with the theme Education for All. It's also part of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and it's part of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. It's also part of the International Decade for Action with Respect to Water for Life.

March is National Liver Health Month, National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, National Kidney Month, National Nutrition Month, National Social Work Month, Fraud Prevention Month, Youth Science Month.

We're part of and have just finished participating in Canadian Landmine Action Week. This week, February 26 to March 7, is National Engineering and Geoscience Week. It's also Social Work Week in Alberta, as it is Pharmacist Awareness Week. March 2 to 8 is International Women's Week, culminating on March 8, International Women's Day. March 2 to 8 is also Health Ethics Week. March 6 is the World Day of Prayer. March 6 to 22 is Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, or National Francophonie Week.

2:50

March 8 is also daylight savings time initiation. From sunset on March 8 to sundown on March 9 is Mawlid an-Nabi, the birthday of Mohammed. March 9 is also Commonwealth Day. March 9 and 10 are Purim, part of the Jewish tradition. March 11 to 14 is Canadian Music Week. March 11 to 17 is Canadian Agriculture Safety Week. March 12 is World Glaucoma Day, as it also is World Kidney Day. March 14 to 20 is National Farm Safety Week. March 15 is World Consumer Rights Day. March 16 to 22 is Brain Awareness Week. March 17 is St. Patrick's Day. March 20 is Journée internationale de la Francophonie. It's also the spring equinox. It's also International Sun-Earth Day, and it's also World Storytelling Day.

March 21 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as it is World Poetry Day, as it is the first day of the week from March 21 to 27, known as the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination. March 22 is World Water Day. March 23 is World Meteorological Day. March 23 to April 12 are the Easter Seals Paper Egg campaign weeks. March 24 is World Tuberculosis Day. March 25 is the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. March 27 is World Theatre Day.

Before we go to Orders of the Day, I believe, hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, that we dealt with the point of order that you were going to raise? It was cleared?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes. Thank you.

### Orders of the Day

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

Mr. Johnston moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

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

[Debate adjourned February 19]

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today with my response to the Speech from the Throne and to thank His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor for delivering the Speech from the Throne that opened this session, the Second Session of the 27th sitting of the Alberta Legislature. I also want to pass along my best wishes at this time to all of my constituents in Calgary-Currie. It is a great honour to represent you in the Alberta Legislature.

We have many challenges before us, but the people of Calgary-Currie continue to demonstrate the type of resilience and willingness to work together to solve problems that I think gives this province its character. As was noted in the Legislature earlier today, Mr. Speaker, one year ago today we were elected to serve the people of Alberta. Many of us were re-elected; 31 of us were elected for the first time. How things have changed in that past year, especially on the economic front.

It is true that we are going to experience some tough times this year. Albertans have overcome huge challenges in the past, and we will get through this one, too. But if I have one message as Official Opposition finance critic today, it is this: there is a right way and a wrong way to overcome challenges. We need a plan, Mr. Speaker, a strategy to lighten the impact of this crisis, to stimulate the economy, to support people who are hurt by the downturn, and to keep people working. We need to keep investing in infrastructure – roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, and public transit – because infrastructure puts people to work in real jobs, building and maintaining real things that we can use. We need to diversify and green our economy. We need to invest in health, education and workforce training, housing, and human services so that no Albertan gets left behind. To do that, we need to cut out all the wasteful and unnecessary spending and reallocate those dollars to the programs and the priorities that work, to the programs and the priorities that count.

The government of Alberta spends 23 per cent more per capita than the national average, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's time we had more to show for it. Let's learn from this. Oil and gas is not stable at any price and will not stay stable at any price. This means we need to start saving our nonrenewable resource revenues when prices are soaring so that we have a cushion when times get tough. It's the only way we're ever going to get off the boom-and-bust roller coaster. I know there are some experts who have said that the

government of Alberta, quite frankly, can't afford to embark on a savings program this year. I would suggest that they can't afford not to.

Were this a family that we were planning a financial plan for, we would understand that you have to do three things simultaneously. You have to pay your debts, and you have to make those debt payments on time. That's an obligation you have to your creditors. You have to meet your daily and monthly expenses. And you have to set aside something for the future for whatever purpose you're saving for, whether it's your retirement, your kids' education, a down payment on a house, whatever. Sometimes when times are tough, when the money is a little bit thin, you can't save as much as you would like to. You can't put as much into your retirement plan as your salary would indicate that you could, but you have to put something in there because it's about getting into the habit as much as anything. We need to get into the savings habit in this province in a way that we never have.

Mr. Speaker, the Holy Cross centre in Mission has been a valued community landmark and health services provider in my constituency for years. This is why the fate of the site remains a top concern of mine as plans proceed to attempt to have it rezoned and perhaps to redevelop the site. I've heard from many of you, many of my constituents, who wish to have a continued health care presence in the community, and I agree. The province has invested millions of tax dollars in the Tom Baker cancer centre. The people of Calgary-Currie must see a return on their investment. They deserve to have the current health care services preserved in any redevelopment plans. Furthermore, with the economy cooling and job losses beginning to mount, the need for affordable housing will continue, and the Holy Cross site is a perfect candidate to help address this need.

On the topic of affordable housing, Mr. Speaker, it's true that housing prices have started to decline, but a \$280,000 condo now is no more affordable to someone on the street or someone without a job, someone without prospects than a \$300,000 condo was last summer. We are going to see an increased demand for housing as the economy slows, and we're going to have to use ever more innovative ways to help the economy recover, I think. It therefore makes sense to preserve construction jobs – and, as my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar pointed out a few minutes ago, construction unemployment in this province now tops 9 per cent – and at the same time get people out of the shelter and off the street. So let's make affordable housing development a moral deed that pays this year.

Like most Calgarians I am tired of having our city's reputation tarnished by reports of gang violence. That's why I support initiatives to give law enforcement more of the basics: more cops, tougher penalties, more stringent bail conditions, and passing my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo's Bill 201 to allow police to take additional effective action against gangbangers who transport guns in vehicles, whether that happens to be a vehicle they legitimately own or a vehicle they stole from somebody else.

In Calgary-Currie we're also especially interested in cutting gangs off at the source by ensuring that our kids aren't being recruited into the gangs, recruited by gangbangers. We need more after school programs, Mr. Speaker. The minister for children's services gave some statistics in the House earlier today about the number of child care spaces, daycare spaces that have been created. We have made progress on that file. Where we really need to make progress, I believe, in the coming year is in before and after school care. I repeatedly hear from law enforcement and social service workers who tell me that unsupervised youth are the biggest targets for gang

recruitment. While mom and dad are at work, our kids need something to occupy their time. Let's make sure it's safe and supervised.

About health care, Mr. Speaker. In the 1990s the people of Alberta were told repeatedly that if we made some short-term sacrifices, we would see long-term gains. We are still waiting. Health services were cut, hospitals closed, doctors lost, nurses fired, and now the health minister is telling us to stop whining about the fact that these things haven't been replaced, these things and these people. Well, if hospitals don't get built and if beds don't get staffed, Albertans don't get the health care that they deserve for their tax dollars. End of story. Times are tough enough without having to worry about our health care or that of a loved one. Let's not burden Albertans with another worry. Let's continue to invest in health care.

Mr. Speaker, to end, I just want to note that it's good to see legislation in this session that will allow postsecondary institutions in the baccalaureate and applied studies institutions sector to finally apply to be able to name the elephant in the room; that is, to become authorized, on jumping through the necessary hoops, to call themselves what they are, universities, if they wish. Bill 4 will finally allow the rest of the nation and the rest of the world to recognize Mount Royal, of which many of my constituents are proud to call themselves students, faculty, support staff, alumni, and their families, for what it has already effectively become, an excellent undergraduate university focused on teaching. It has been a long time coming, and I know my constituents and I look forward to the day when Mount Royal becomes officially Mount Royal University.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Then I'll call on the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

3:00

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. I'm very happy to be able to stand today to respond to the 2009 throne speech delivered by His Honour Norman Kwong, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. I would like to thank His Honour for his work as our Lieutenant Governor. In the throne speech he read: Alberta is a beautiful and blessed province that has attracted people of courage and determination, dreamers who saw opportunity here. I wonder if His Honour realized that he was describing himself, a person of courage and determination, a dreamer, an Albertan who saw the opportunity and seized the day. He is an inspiration for all Albertans, one of only a very few that have won both the Grey Cup and the Stanley Cup. Thank you, Your Honour, for being an inspiration to all Albertans and Canadians. You have shown us that whatever the mind can conceive, the person can achieve.

I wonder sometimes if we ever thank our families enough for supporting us in our roles as MLAs. In many ways it is as if the Crown receives two persons for the price of one as our spouses and significant others support us in the many activities that we undertake to meet and greet our constituents and their concerns. I want to now once again let my family know how much their love and support mean to me. I would not be able to help other people as an MLA or as a minister without their unconditional love. Bob, Jeremy, Amy, Krystin, Amber, Tyler, and my five incredible grandchildren – Taiya, Hannah, Kaden, Camryn, and Morgan – thank you for your love and support. You are the wind beneath my wings.

I would also like to thank the people of Red Deer-North for allowing me to have the privilege of serving them in a fourth term as their MLA, and a special thanks to all the volunteers who have

stood by my side for the past four elections and nominations. Helen Keller was right when she said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

I came to Red Deer in 1980 thinking that one day I would return to Ontario, the place of my birth. It didn't take me long to realize that if I was searching for paradise on earth, I had found it. Although I believed that Red Deer was paradise, as I have come to know Alberta better, I realize that Red Deer is the centre of paradise. Red Deer is like living in the country in the middle of a city. The friendly wave from your neighbour or a friendly wave from a complete stranger, a warm smile from the commissioner as he places another parking ticket on your windshield, and the helping hand of a passerby as he stops to open a door for you tell you that you are in the right place.

Nowhere else in Canada can you live only an hour and a half from two NHL teams, two CFL teams, two international airports, and two Jubilee auditoriums and not have to put up with rush hour traffic jams or drive-by shootings. Although things are changing and the innocence and charm of our city is threatened by increasing criminal activity, I take great comfort in the safe communities program, that will provide a new law enforcement framework that will make it very uncomfortable for gangs and organized crime to grow and prosper in Alberta.

Alberta has drawn a line. We have drawn a line not in the shifting sands but in solid rock, in the foothills of the Rockies and in the fields of wheat and in the cities and in the towns. Albertans will not put their heads in the sand and ignore the signs all around us. We will take a stand to make our communities strong and safe, for what is the worth of a village that cannot protect its own?

The throne speech states that Alberta "is made up of vibrant, inclusive communities, places of opportunity, culture, and belonging where families and children are supported, where the vulnerable are cared for, and where people feel safe." Fostering strong and sustainable communities includes supporting children and families, helping Albertans through tough times, and supporting seniors and persons with disabilities.

As Minister of Seniors and Community Supports I'm very honoured and humbled to represent seniors and persons with disabilities in Alberta. I would like to thank my very competent and dedicated staff in my office and throughout my ministry, who work so hard to serve seniors and persons with disabilities. I know how important it is for a community to care for its most vulnerable members, and I know that our ministry, with the help of many others, is doing just that. You have all heard the quote that it takes a village to raise a child. Well, I say to you that it takes a village to raise a child to care for an aging person and to care for a person with disabilities. Together we have a shared responsibility, a shared responsibility between the person, the family, and the village.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

One shared responsibility of my ministry is to help Albertans to age in the right place. We have found through consultations with Albertans through the Demographic Planning Commission, chaired by the very capable MLA for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, that Albertans want to live in their homes for as long as possible. One day on my way to my office a gentleman stopped me and told me about his wife of 45 years. He told me that she was showing signs of Alzheimer's disease. Then with great passion he said that he would crawl across broken glass to be able to keep her at home. He would look after her and care for her, only he needed some help, and he asked if I could help him. Between the family, the community, and the government we will find a way to help this man love and care for his wife in their home for as long as possible.

This is where the new continuing care strategy becomes so important to Albertans. This new strategy is in response to our Premier's mandate to improve the quality, improve the supply, and improve client choice in the continuing care system. Improving the continuing care system is a top priority for me, and because of this strategy we will have more community living supports in place so that seniors like the couple that I just spoke about and those with disabilities can receive care in their homes, where they are most comfortable, and have a place to go when they need some more help.

Along with the new continuing care strategy our government understands the importance of seniors' centres in our communities. I've had the opportunity to visit many of these centres in Alberta, and I'm very impressed by the number of people who work together to help seniors maintain a good quality of life. In Cold Lake I met a gentleman who told me about moving to this community and going to the seniors' centre for the first time and sitting alone in the back of the room. Another senior noticed him and asked him what he was doing sitting at the back of the room all by himself. He said he didn't know anyone, so she invited him to sit at her table. She asked him if he knew how to dance, and he said, "I can't remember," so she got him up to dance and discovered that he was indeed a good dancer. He hasn't missed a dance since and is always the first one up, encouraging others to get up and dance. I hope he keeps dancing. Being active with other people helps seniors to remain healthy and happy. Health and happiness are both essential elements to a good quality of life.

To further support our shared responsibility, as you heard in the throne speech, we will be presenting updated legislation this session. The Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act, sponsored by the very competent MLA for Red Deer-South, introduced as Bill 10, will promote the safety and security of seniors by updating legislation that oversees residential living, lodge living, assisted living, and enhanced assisted living. The act will also continue to require facilities to comply with the accommodation standards. I've spoken to many seniors in Alberta who have requested and encouraged this legislation.

In addition and related to our efforts to increase the supply of supportive living units, we are providing more than \$92 million to create more than 870 new units, to modernize 200 units, and to improve seniors' lodges across Alberta. This funding will provide more options for people to remain in their communities and have more affordable alternatives.

Another piece of legislation that will be brought forward by Seniors and Community Supports during this session is the Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act. This legislation will continue to highlight the shared responsibility that we all have within our village by strengthening the existing legislation to ensure the safety of adults receiving care by making it a duty for a person to report abuse.

There are also several other initiatives related to our commitment and shared responsibility of assisting both seniors and persons with disabilities within this village known as Alberta. This includes preparing for an aging population. Did you know that research in the United Kingdom shows that people who prepare a will will live on average 10 more years than those who don't? This is one good reason for you to prepare a will. That looks after your wishes after you die, and a personal directive takes care of your wishes when you're not able to speak for yourself and you're still alive.

3:10

My ministry is promoting personal directives and has developed an online registry, the first of its kind in Canada, to encourage adults to detail their wishes in case they become unable to make personal



decisions. We will continue to support Albertans with disabilities through programs like the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, and the persons with developmental disabilities program, or PDD. The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, chaired by Marlin Styner and the capable MLA from Edmonton-Rutherford as the deputy chair, is a very important connection to the disability community and to the future.

I know that we have a long way to go to make our communities more accessible to those with disabilities. Just last week I had the very humbling experience of needing a wheelchair to get around after I tore a ligament in my knee. Do you know how many places in Alberta do not have universal access? Although I was in the wheelchair for only two days, it became very clear to me that there are many places in Red Deer and Alberta that are not wheelchair accessible. I was forced to cancel a number of appointments because I had no way of going up and down stairs. As baby boomers age, we will add to the numbers of those who require universal access just to make a day.

The throne speech states: "It is Alberta's people that make our province unique: people who are dynamic and genuine, optimistic and open-minded, people who share the freedom to create and the spirit to achieve." Alberta is all of this and more. Alberta is a big village where people share responsibility with courage and determination, where dreamers see the opportunity and work together to seize the day. Peter Seeger, the American folk singer who wrote *Turn! Turn! Turn!*, said, "I want to turn the clock back to when people lived in small villages and took care of each other." I would tell Mr. Seeger that instead of turning the clock back, all he needs to do is move to Alberta – Alberta – a big village where people live and take care of each other.

I am proud to be Albertan. I am proud to be Canadian. As we continue to build this province for those who will inherit this land that we love, I hope that we will always remember to dance like no one is watching, sing like no one is listening, and to love with all our hearts.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Five minutes are available under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today in response to the speech delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor showed considerable emotion in starting his speech and noted that it was his fifth. I can only say in starting a response that we have been well served by this particular Lieutenant Governor and that he has done well for both the institution and office and for the people of Alberta.

One year ago today was Alberta's 27th general election. I was honoured and privileged to be returned to this Assembly for a fourth term by the constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud. It remains a privilege for me to continue to serve those constituents and all the citizens of Alberta as a member of our Premier's government. Anniversaries are always an opportune time to reflect, and the past year has certainly provided ample food for thought. The past six months have been particularly difficult for many Albertans as events in the global energy and banking sectors have brought unexpected uncertainty into our homes and businesses. While today we are concerned about how the economy will impact our families and our neighbours, we must continue to look to the future with the certainty of better times ahead. Now more than ever is the time for faith and foresight as we form that future.

A great challenge for Alberta is to ensure that our future is economically and environmentally sustainable. There is no better way to succeed in tackling this challenge than to invest our resource-based wealth into our people so that we become a key part of the global knowledge economy. A knowledge economy depends not just on the creativity of people but on the facilities, the institutions, the universities and colleges, where knowledge is developed.

In recent years Edmonton has become a world-renowned centre for nanotechnology, energy and natural resources technology, diabetes, cardiology, cancer prevention and treatment, and ambulatory care. Of course, many other parts of Alberta are renowned for what they deliver to the research agenda and the knowledge agenda. The cutting-edge research conducted at our universities, our community facilities, our businesses is garnering international acclaim while generating economic spinoffs and reducing our environmental impact while improving the daily lives of Albertans.

Of course, continuing to build an economy based on knowledge will not be easy. We can and must build on our successes – the best schools, world-class universities, a province-wide fibre-optic network, unique endowment funds, and state-of-the-art facilities for medical, science, and engineering research – to ensure that every Albertan has the opportunity to succeed to the best of his or her abilities.

Alberta has a strong record on which to build a better future, but there's more work to do. In all of this there is one crucial foundation, our basic education system. Leading in learning is central to a successful story. This means making certain that our educational opportunities are second to none, that every child can find his or her passion and grow up to be a caring, contributing, confident member of society. When all Albertans strive together in a shared desire for our children to succeed, we will ensure that our province reaps the benefits of maximizing its human potential.

The timeless promise of education everywhere is to nurture and stimulate, to enrich and fulfill the innate potential in every human being, and that is why we strive to ensure that every child looks on the world with wonder, is fascinated by constant surprises, and is challenged and uplifted by the search for truth in all things. That's why our schools must be places of delight and dedication, diversity and depth, places of dignity and vitality in which we can gather and celebrate, aspire and achieve.

Yet education is not solely about what happens in schools. It infuses and informs the whole of life. It is about preparing each student for life as a citizen, teaching them to appreciate their entitlements, capitalize on their opportunities, and fulfill their responsibilities. Instilling hope, respect, dignity, and humility in our young people is thus a task that cannot be undertaken solely by educators. The entire community must actively contribute.

Mr. Speaker, education exists not just for the child but for the community. Every Albertan has a stake in what happens in our schools today. Years from now the toddler you passed on the street today may be the nurse caring for you in a hospital, the youngster ahead of you in line at a grocery store may be the police officer keeping your community safe, and the teenager who helps you with your computer may employ you at the next big Alberta company. Education does not become any less important when our children and our grandchildren graduate from school. It is a never-ending and noble task for only through education do we bolster the shared bonds of community and citizenship.

Our province is unique because of the content of our characters and the sense of purpose of our souls. It is therefore imperative that our children learn to honour our heritage and dedicate themselves to the future. Only in an education system that is open to all Albertans regardless of gender, race, religion, class, or geography can our

students come to appreciate the value of diversity and to learn to make judgments about things that truly matter. People come to Alberta from all over the world because of the opportunities that are available here, especially in our schools. That is why it's essential that every person has the opportunity they need to learn, adapt, and develop new knowledge and new skills, and it makes it absolutely critical that those learning opportunities are high quality, accessible, affordable, and sustainable for all Albertans.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor said, "The freedom to create our own future and achieve our dreams so often rests on our enthusiasm for education." To this end we've undertaken a project called Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans, ably chaired by the Member for Athabasca-Redwater and an Edmonton school-teacher, Brent McDonough, a former U of A senator. We undertake this effort not because there is anything wrong with our schools. Indeed, education is one of those things of which Albertans can be rightfully proud. People come to Alberta from all over the world to see our school infrastructure and to observe how our children learn. International tests often place Alberta as one of the top five education systems in the world. Clearly, the hard work of students, teachers, parents, administrators in our school communities are deserving of celebration. However, new times demand new approaches, and the time has come to establish what educational excellence looks like in the next part of the 21st century.

Inspiring Education is both a process and a product, an invigoration of learning in our province and a legacy to leave to the next generation. We seek to renew public appreciation for the value and importance of education in Albertans' lives and to build understanding of how education is increasingly the basis of a prosperous society and economy. We must develop a broadly accepted and clear understanding of what it will mean to be an educated Albertan 20 years from now, and we must look beyond our immediate needs and interests to develop a policy framework which describes the overall direction, principles, and long-term goals for education in Alberta over the next two decades.

Mr. Speaker, by reaching out to Albertans to explore their hopes, dreams, and aspirations for their children, we will ensure that education enables every one of our citizens to face the future with confidence. We will know that we have succeeded when our children are inspired to be imaginative, inventive, inquiring, inclusive, informed, independent, and industrious. With education Albertans will continue to have the freedom to create and the spirit to achieve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) five minutes are available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. Earlier during question period the hon. Minister of Education suggested that this past summer, when sod was being turned for a P3 school in southeast Calgary, I was potentially wearing earmuffs and blinders because I confused the Babcock & Brown financing. I would just ask the minister: was I wearing earmuffs and, potentially, blinders during the Speech from the Throne? I don't recall having heard any reference about full-day funding for kindergarten. I don't recall hearing any reference to funding for half-day junior kindergarten. I don't recall any references being made to catching up on defrayed infrastructure for schools. The Calgary public board of education, for example, is \$630 million behind.

If I was in fact missing these points, as I obviously did in the summer, were these ideas mentioned in the Speech from the Throne? Was there any mention, Minister, of getting rid of the publication of achievement test scores? Could you please clarify if I somehow missed those points in the throne speech?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as has been just said to me, there is absolutely no way to tell how many ideas this fellow has missed. But, in fact, if the Speech from the Throne was simply a litany of programs and things to be done, if that's all that was in the Speech from the Throne, the true meaning of a Speech from the Throne, in my view, would be missed. The Lieutenant Governor when he delivers the Speech from the Throne, yes, talks about the agenda for the next year, but what he's really talking about are our hopes and dreams for the future of the province. In Inspiring Education, which was mentioned by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, he truly encompassed the things that we need to do to plan that future for the children of this province to make sure that they get the kind of education that they need.

The hon. member can list all of the issues, and certainly there are issues in education. No one is denying that there are things that need to be done. Notwithstanding the comment from Red Deer-North earlier, Alberta, although a wonderful place, is not necessarily a perfect place. There are things that we can do to make it better. There are things that we can do to make education today better. But what I was addressing my remarks to was about making sure that as we move forward into tomorrow, we understand what the world of tomorrow for our children is going to be like and what things we need to do to make sure that our children and our grandchildren can live here and work here and enjoy the environment here, the place that we've come to know and love.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that I was at a conference in London, England, with 65 ministers of education from around the world, one of the few subnational ministers of education there, and it was very affirming because those ministers of education were aspiring to have what we have in Alberta: wide broad-band connectivity for all of our schools, good curriculum, strong teaching, those things which make the education system strong. Do they have challenges as we have challenges of keeping up with the school infrastructure? Absolutely. Are there more things that we could do on a day-to-day basis? Absolutely. Do we need to work more on early childhood and addressing issues, identifying concerns? Absolutely. But we've got a pretty great place, and we're going to make it even better.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. When you were in England attending the conference with the 65 ministers, did they mention a program where children who scored very poorly in standardized achievement tests in Britain received grants of £9,000 apiece, each school, to raise the level of the children who were having such difficulties with testing as opposed to simply publishing their test scores?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of publishing their test scores, I would have to say this: the government of Alberta does not publish children's test scores. We have a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which allows people to get access to information, and members opposite, including that member, routinely ask us to give out more information. Well, one of the pieces of information that we, unfortunately, have to give out are the test scores, and then the Fraser Institute publishes them and ranks schools. But I routinely say, when asked, that those reports ranking

the schools is a wrong use of the data, inappropriate use of the data, and I will continue to say that.

I will say in response to his other question, about what I learned, that I learned a lot about things we could do, things that we could do better. In fact, I had the opportunity to go up to Sheffield in England – and I know you're wanting me to wrap up. They're rebuilding their secondary system, and in doing so, they're mandating wrap-around services. There's a thing we could learn from them.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to rise on behalf of the constituents of Airdrie-Chestermere and respond to the Speech from the Throne. It really has been a very interesting first year and a very memorable first year. I learn lots every day from my constituents, and it's been an honour to serve with the members from this House.

Mr. Speaker, these are sobering times. Today Albertans and the rest of the world are experiencing feelings of great anxiety and feelings of unease at the state of the world's economy. Jobs are being lost, and incomes are tightening, and a mountain of consumer and government debt is piling up. I know that many Albertans, including many of my own constituents, are hurting, and many more are worrying that they or their loved ones might become the next casualty of this economic downturn. However, we must not allow undue pessimism or negative thoughts to become self-fulfilling prophecy. As Albertans we must do what we have done in times before: we must stand up, we must get to work, and we must turn these daunting challenges into opportunities. It is these opportunities that I wish to address today.

The hardships we face present us with a chance, I think, to refocus, to replan, to set goals, and to aspire to new achievements. As government revenues shrink, we as a fiscally conservative province should re-examine the ways in which we deliver core services to Albertans. Throwing around more money and regulation at tired and antiquated ways of delivering health care, education, and infrastructure will not solve our problems. Rather, we must without preconception, as we are doing in these areas right now, learn of the best and most innovative practices from around the world and have the courage to implement them.

Similarly, crippling our resource-based economy with overregulation and wealth redistribution schemes will do nothing to help the world's environment and certainly will not stimulate an economic recovery. As our Premier has indicated, committing Albertans' hard-earned money to an international trading scheme run by the same kinds of geniuses that brought us the credit crisis and subprime mortgage meltdown is simply not a sensible course of action. Rather, the key to dealing with our environmental challenges will be found in new innovation and new technology. It's funny. Where many critics see the oil sands as a threat to our world's environment, Albertans see the potential wealth and technology derived from the oil sands as the very solution to the environmental challenges the world faces.

3:30

It is this sort of innovative thinking and leadership that has made Alberta today one of the best positioned jurisdictions in the world to successfully weather the current economic storm. We have in times turned challenges into opportunities, and we need to do so again. For example, in the recession and commodities bust of the early 1990s, while governments in this country and around the world increased spending, increased taxes, and built up debt, Alberta took a very unique and decidedly different approach. The Progressive

Conservatives under then Premier Ralph Klein curbed spending, lowered taxes, and began implementing a plan to pay down the provincial debt. The result: the economy recovered and a prolonged boom ensued.

But our party did not stop there. Our government stuck to the plan to pay off the debt and paid off the entire balance. It also invested close to \$14 billion in our rainy day sustainability fund and capital account for exactly this sort of economic downturn. In short, Albertans and we as their government made the fiscally prudent and innovative decisions necessary to place ourselves in the enviable position we find ourselves in today. We turned a fiscal downturn into an opportunity to become better fiscal stewards for the long term.

Now, not everything was handled perfectly, obviously. First, it is safe to say that some core programs were cut too deeply. It is likely that almost the same cost-cutting could have occurred without so much pain had the cuts been better planned and focused. Our current Premier has made it clear that he will take a more prudent and measured approach during the current downturn.

Second – and this is a problem that I believe we're still facing today – is the issue of bringing government spending under control and to do so permanently. This is the key to the long-term success of our province, and it is this opportunity that we have before us today. That is why I will be urging our government to legislatively limit overall government spending to the rate of inflation plus real GDP growth.

This type of legislation has several advantages. It ensures that spending does not get out of control, while providing the funds necessary for continued strong core social programs. In fact, if former Prime Minister Paul Martin had kept his promise while then Finance minister in 2000 to cap government spending to the rate of inflation plus growth, the federal government would be expecting a surplus this year rather than a \$34 billion deficit. In Alberta, where our total provincial spending has increased 140 per cent since 1996, it is clear that had we instituted adequate spending controls, we would be announcing surpluses even during this world-wide recession and corresponding low oil and gas prices.

Another advantage to spending control is that it would provide clear benchmarks and have the effect of curtailing the size and scope of government bureaucracy as departments look for innovative ways to provide more efficient and better services by reallocating existing funding rather than simply asking for more funding while outdated and wasteful programs linger on.

Most importantly, though, this type of legislation could act as a cornerstone of a new, long-term financial plan for Alberta. By controlling spending in this way, it will only take a few short years of modest growth and commodity price recovery for our provincial revenues to greatly outstrip expenditures. This would allow us to grow the heritage fund substantially by investing unbudgeted surpluses therein, and as the fund grows over time, the annual interest returns from the fund would eventually eliminate our reliance on oil and gas revenues, which are both volatile and nonrenewable.

This sort of forward thinking will save our children and grandchildren from having to either substantially raise taxes or cut core social programs. Wouldn't it be a wonderful gift to our children and to our grandchildren if by enacting such a plan, we turn what was once a sea of nonrenewable oil and gas revenue into a mountain of permanent investment capital compounding with interest each and every year? From that point the possibilities are endless. We could grow the heritage fund further for the purposes of substantially lowering income taxes. We could invest in infrastructure, health care, education, and other core programs in degrees that other

jurisdictions could only dream of. In short, we could elevate the Alberta advantage in unprecedented ways, attracting the best people, the best entrepreneurs, the best businesses and technologies from around the world and for decades to come.

With those thoughts and aspirations in mind, Mr. Speaker, but, obviously, recognizing the feelings of unease and uncertainty that many of us in the province feel right now, I want to conclude by expressing to my constituents and each and every Albertan my faith that our province is prepared to weather this economic storm and that the spirit and drive of our people will turn these struggles and challenges into new levels of opportunity. I would say with unequivocal certainty that Alberta's best and brightest days are still to come.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I very much appreciate the comments and the hope for Alberta to survive this economic recession. I would like to know if you support the notion behind Motion 501 of investing in public infrastructure in schools, in hospitals, in roads and under what circumstance you would limit any expenditures to inflation. For example, if there was a circumstance where a hospital desperately needed to be completed or major infrastructure repairs suddenly became necessary, are you flexible on that inflationary sort of limit?

**Mr. Anderson:** Well, I would say that it would probably be an important idea to keep spending – and that would include all increases in government spending – under that cap. But we have to realize that, yeah, there are situations where infrastructure is needed, and sometimes, perhaps, that might take us over the cap. Where I think that money would come from in that case is the capital account, money that had already been set aside for that purpose. Whether we put all the money into a heritage fund and build that up for the purposes of eliminating our dependence on oil and gas revenues or whether we put a portion of that into kind of a capital heritage account so that when there's a downturn, we have money to spend on and stimulate the economy through infrastructure projects, et cetera, that's definitely a way of doing it. But the point is that on a year-over-year increase, operational government spending would only increase by inflation plus growth. If we did that, we could put away money for those types of infrastructure projects as well as the heritage fund.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. In a fashion, I think, what you're talking about is almost the equivalent of a COLA clause, where you adjust expenses by inflationary measures. I'm wondering: with regard to savings do you think that even during this time of recession it is important to sock money away for the future? Do you think it's possible to both save and responsibly spend at this recessionary time?

**Mr. Anderson:** I think it's very important to make sure we're controlling our spending, but there's no point, in my view, in borrowing money to save money. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. There is some case to be made for it in some circumstances, but I don't think that that's what we should be looking at. What we should be looking at and what the Premier, I believe, has done is laid out a specific plan for getting us out of this recession, on the road to recovery, and part of that includes controlling our

spending. Then, once we are out of recession and once revenues start to again outstrip expenditures, I think that point would be the time to implement an aggressive saving strategy. That would be my feeling.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I agree with you. The idea of borrowing money to save money is questionable, but that's the underlying principle of P3s. The idea is that rather than use your own money now, if you borrow that money, you can get a better price for construction. Do you feel free to comment on P3s, which, in fact, borrow money against future prospects?

**Mr. Anderson:** Well, as I said in the response to the throne speech, we need to be looking at innovative solutions that maybe we haven't looked at before, and I think actually P3s fit the bill quite well. They do lead to an overall savings for taxpayers if they're done appropriately. What I would like to see – and I think that it could be argued that the heritage fund and the other funds do this – is make sure that those future obligations are backed up by money set aside for that purpose so that we're not mortgaging our children's future on P3s. But the concept of P3s as a way of saving money for Albertans I think is a very solid initiative so long as we're backing up those obligations for the future.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** No one else wishes to speak?

The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is my pleasure to rise this afternoon and to make a few remarks in response to the Speech from the Throne delivered by His Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor. As was noted earlier today, we are celebrating one year since the last election, and I can only remark that after listening to the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere and other hon. members that form a part of the majority in this House, there were 72 gold stars handed out a year ago, and the hon. member is but one of them.

What struck me about his opening comments was that after a year he has noted that this job is most interesting. I'm part of the class of '97. I'm in my 12th year, and indeed those of us from that particular year will be celebrating 12 years next week. I can tell you, hon. Speaker, that after 12 years I still find this job most interesting. It continues to be an honour. It has always been an honour. Indeed, it has always been a matter of waking up each day and saying: this is a privilege, and I look forward to what I am doing. I can tell you that all of us in this House, I believe, feel that way most of the time. I can think of no exception to it, but to have somebody after a year say that and to be able to say it after 12 years I think speaks well, even when we've gone through, in my case, 12 throne speeches.

What I would like to say about the hon. Lieutenant Governor is that it would appear that his reading of the throne speech this year may be his last. He is in his fifth year. I'm not sure that his term will take him through another one, but if it does, that would be great. If it does not, however, I would like to join others in thanking him for his grace and good humour – and indeed there has been great grace and great good humour for his regular travels throughout this province – and for all he has done for the people of Alberta.

The Lieutenant Governor in his remarks stated that Alberta is a trading province and that our economic success depends on competing in a world marketplace. Well, Mr. Speaker, trading and competing in a world marketplace is part of the critical work of my

ministry, International and Intergovernmental Relations. Alberta has advocated for the elimination of barriers to interprovincial trade, and we have been very successful.

With the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, otherwise known as TILMA, Alberta and B.C. have shown tremendous leadership in breaking down interprovincial barriers. No other Canadian jurisdiction has made a commitment like this. On April 1 of this year Alberta and B.C. will have achieved full labour mobility for all certified tradespeople and a majority of other occupations, reconciled business registration and reporting requirements, and the reconciliation of several regulations that have impeded trade and investment. As a result Albertans will be able to pursue career, business, and investment opportunities in B.C. without going through needless red tape.

The TILMA has been and will continue to be a catalyst at the national level. The pan-Canadian agreement on internal trade has recently been amended to incorporate TILMA-like labour mobility and dispute resolution provisions. There has also been significant progress to bring the TILMA principles to the AIT chapters on energy and agriculture.

Alberta is also a strong and consistent supporter of trade liberalization at the international level. We believe success at the Doha round, where Canada and other member countries of the WTO have been negotiating to liberalize international trade, is the best way to gain international market access for Alberta exporters. Alberta's priorities in the WTO Doha round negotiations have been liberalizing trade in agriculture – in other words, eliminating export subsidies – liberalizing trade in the industrial goods and services, and reducing unnecessary red tape surrounding international trade. Alberta intends to remain fully engaged to ensure that its interests are reflected in the approaches taken by Canada in these negotiations.

Of course, the current economic market has had an impact on trade. Exports and imports dropped in December amid the global economic downturn, with exports falling at a faster pace than imports. Canada recorded its first trade deficit since March 1976. Alberta's exports dropped 14 per cent, from \$8.25 billion to \$7 billion, from November to December. It was inevitable that the global economic recession and the economic crisis in the United States would affect our exports. That said, 2008 was an exceptional year overall for Alberta as our exports reached \$109 billion, which is up from \$81.8 billion in 2007. Alberta continues to supply goods that countries around the world need: food and energy. This puts us in a very favourable position on a go-forward basis. Alberta continues to be a net exporter and will be into the foreseeable future.

The effects of the economic downturn on global trade are a further indication that the work International and Intergovernmental Relations does to promote Alberta business and attract investment abroad is all the more crucial. There's no question our province's economic success is tied to our ability to market our goods, services, and people globally. My ministry will continue its outreach to Alberta companies, gaining their input on international business, providing information on international trade and export opportunities through our trade offices.

The trade offices help the province compete in the global marketplace and showcase and market Alberta to attract tourism and labour. In '07-08 our international offices facilitated more than 3,300 networking sessions and participated in almost 200 trade shows to promote trade and investment in Alberta. We also promote foreign investment in Alberta through direct contact with key multinational corporations to encourage expansion into our province. Alberta will continue to diversify our export base and will target international markets that offer solid export opportunities.

To ensure that the message about Alberta's leadership, commitment, and action on the environment reaches an international

audience, international travel by the Premier and cabinet ministers is vital. We cannot wait for international opportunities to come to us. We are an export-based economy, and creating linkages with other countries is essential for Alberta. Particularly during this time of economic uncertainty it's important that the Premier and cabinet ministers meet face to face with government and business leaders. We need to demonstrate that Alberta's investment climate remains strong.

International activities also expand beyond business. We nurture strong international relations in other areas of importance to Albertans: culture, sport, education, technology. One of our most important relationships is with our biggest trading partner and neighbour to the south, the United States. The election of President Obama was an historic event and has brought a renewed sense of purpose and vigour to the American people and to the U.S. government. The new U.S. administration has the potential to directly impact Alberta's economic fortunes. The oil sands are an important key to North American energy security, and we know the world demands that the resource be developed with great care and especially great care to the environment. We demand it from ourselves, and we will reinforce to the new administration that we are committed to continuous improvement on the environmental front.

During these difficult times it is prudent for all governments to weigh and re-evaluate the economic impacts of any policy decision. Discussions over cap and trade systems as well as carbon taxes are not new for Alberta. Right now that is what they are, discussions. Alberta believes that the key to addressing climate change is unleashing technology, specifically carbon capture and storage. President Obama has talked about the importance of clean coal and alternative energy. Alberta is pursuing clean coal, and we have committed some \$239 million to bioenergy development. It should also be noted that we are leaders in Canada in wind power production.

Our Alberta Washington office is at the front line of ensuring that the relationship with our top economic partner remains positive. It focuses on key areas, including energy and the environment, agriculture, forestry, and technology. The office also ensures progressive energy-related initiatives under way in our province are understood and factored into new U.S. rules and regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make some comments in response to the throne speech.

3:50

**The Acting Speaker:** Five minutes are available under Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I believe that the hon. Deputy Premier is a man of integrity. In discussions we had with regard to affordable housing, he indicated to me that affordable housing wasn't a top priority for the individuals he represented in his constituency. I'm just wondering, with regard to the Speech from the Throne and the government's actions, are you confident that in the nine years that remain in the 10-year plan, the government will have taken every opportunity to provide affordable housing for Albertans? Can we reach that goal?

**Mr. Stevens:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's always encouraging to know that this hon. member believes that I am a person of integrity. It's helpful to hear that in this place or any other place.

I think that what I would say about our efforts in the area of homelessness is that our Premier and the minister responsible have taken significant leadership in developing this particular plan. I have

every faith in the ability of Albertans to focus their attention and their resources on this. I have no doubt that as we go along, we will see incredible progress being made and that when we look back upon this, as we march towards that 10-year mark, we will be most proud of what we have accomplished, and we will have accomplished a great deal.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I do want to acknowledge that the government has contributed, for example, to the Mustard Seed structure, that the government has contributed to the drop-in centre, and those are very much appreciated expenditures. Does the hon. Deputy Premier believe that the government has done enough in terms of supporting organizations like Inn from the Cold and women's shelters? In the last year we had over 19,000 women turned away from shelters. Could the government, during this recessionary period, armed by Motion 501, be even more aggressive on eliminating homelessness and providing shelter?

**Mr. Stevens:** Mr. Speaker, as has been noted in one of the previous responses to this hon. member's questions, the government always acknowledges that we can do more. There are always matters that need to be attended to, and while I'm not specifically aware of what is happening with the organizations that he alludes to, I have no doubt that in that area there's always more that can be done. What I know is that when budgets are presented – and one will be presented in early April – we have the opportunity to measure the amount of money that is available and the choices that are made by government and debate that at that time, and that would be an appropriate time to deal with the specifics of the question that the hon. member has put forward. But from my perspective, we have come a long way in addressing many of those necessary and important social issues. Almost assuredly there is more to be done. We will wait and see what the budget ultimately says on April 7.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak?

Hon. members, if no one else wishes to speak, in order to move on in government business, we have to have someone who has not spoken in response to the Speech from the Throne adjourn debate on this. Perhaps the hon. government whip would wish to adjourn debate on this?

**Mr. Oberle:** I would be pleased, Mr. Speaker, to move that we adjourn debate on the throne speech.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 3

#### Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009

[Adjourned debate February 18: Mr. Berger]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and join second reading debate on Bill 3, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009. I will be brief on this. [some applause] What? You wanted me to go on? [interjection] Well, you know, in my own opinion, I don't think there's 20 minutes' worth of talking for me to

do on this one, hon. member. I believe that when the bill is mostly in order, which I feel this one is, I should just get down to the business of saying so and express a couple of concerns that we do have.

This bill will allow credit union boards to use advance polling to elect board members, and it will also remove the time frame when credit union committees are to submit reports to the board. Credit Union Central Alberta, which is the central banking facility service bureau and trade association for the credit union system in Alberta, requested the ability to use advance polls in order to facilitate the participation of credit union members. Thus, in the spring 2008 sitting Bill 13, the Financial Institutions Statutes Amendment Act, was passed, which partially dealt with modernizing amendments to the Credit Union Act. These changes allowed for the increased use of technology, privacy enhancements for directors. It gave the option for directors to apply for loans with their credit unions without having their peers on the board be involved in the approval process.

Now, what this amendment act, Bill 3, seeks to do is allow vacancies that are filled during annual general meetings to be filled in another manner provided for by the bylaws, for instance advance polling. Some credit unions did advance polling in the past, so this bill would have retroactive validation of their elected board members, which would avoid any legal action that could be undertaken for those elected in advance polls before it was actually legislated.

The other thing that this bill does, as I said, is remove the time frame when credit union committees are to submit reports to the board. The original legislation stated that reports are to be submitted after meetings forthwith or at least once a month or at least once a quarter. The proposed amendments will simply state that reports should be submitted forthwith after each of the committee's meetings.

Mr. Speaker, we have checked with stakeholders. Those who have responded to our requests have no complaints with the bill and see it as cleanup legislation. We're still waiting for a response from one particular stakeholder, but we're not anticipating that that response is going to be different.

I really only have a couple of questions, which I think we can probably deal with in committee stage. The questions are these. These amendments state that members can only be appointed or elected outside of annual general meetings "in another manner provided for by the bylaws." What I'd like to know around that is: what will determine quorum, if anything? Does this open the door for problems, with the elections being seen as fair or unfair? On the reporting by committees, how will the reporting back to the credit union boards be monitored to ensure that it happens? Really, all it says now is "forthwith" under Bill 3, and while this certainly allows for some flexibility, there's a potential danger, I think, that forthwith might be too vague and may lead to delays in reporting.

If we get satisfactory answers back to the above questions, then I would imagine that our response to that is probably going to be that the amendments as proposed in this bill are fairly minor and probably won't be contentious. Of course, if we get answers back that we don't like, it might be a different story.

That's my take on it at this point. I will take my seat now and see if any other members wish to join debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I very much appreciate my hon. colleague from Calgary-Currie's brevity. I think he was potentially allowing me more time to speak on the bill. However, I agree with him and

do not see great concern with this bill. Basically, what it does is facilitate a democratic electoral process, and that's very much in need in the province of Alberta, even though it's at the credit union stage as opposed to adopting I think it was 182 recommendations made by our former Chief Electoral Officer, Lorne Gibson. By the time he'd finished with his recommendations, I think they'd come up to 250. However, the election of a credit union board is considerably simpler.

4:00

The concerns that the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie brought up with quorum, making sure that the votes were accurately counted and reflect the wishes of the credit union membership, are extremely important. Just recently I had an opportunity, for example, to vote for the board of First Calgary Financial, and I appreciated that opportunity to simply mail in my ballot and first and second choices. I'm sure that the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009, Bill 3, will facilitate that process.

It's unfortunate that in this province it's so hard to have your vote registered and have your vote counted in general, but within Bill 3, Credit Union Amendment Act, regulations of voting procedures will be set out, and hopefully, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie pointed out, the "forthwith" comment will be replaced by a specific time, at which the election of the new board will be noted and, hopefully, celebrated.

Being as this is a bill of facilitation, a bill, basically, of cutting red tape, eliminating bureaucracy, encouraging credit union participation, at this point I am supportive of Bill 3.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak?

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod to close debate.

**Mr. Berger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wish to close debate at this time. I'll bring forward answers to those questions at committee.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

## Bill 8 Feeder Associations Guarantee Act

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to rise today and move second reading of Bill 8, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act.

As shared during the introduction of Bill 8, Mr. Speaker, this bill provides a rewrite of the existing act. Like the current act, the proposed legislation supports the growth and the development of feeder associations. We all know that the agriculture industry makes an important contribution to Alberta's economy and the development of our rural communities. Under the leadership of the Premier, our government has committed to ensuring that Alberta's agriculture industry has effective financial services. Like any industry or business sector, financial services are critical to business development opportunities. This also applies to our livestock producers and feeder associations, who want to be competitive and enjoy some long-term success. Specifically, the current and proposed acts authorize government loan guarantees to financial institutions that lend money to local feeder associations.

This bill adds clarity to several sections of the act and refines the text, such as using current legal language, updating definitions, and

clarifying roles. I will highlight a few of the updates and clarifications proposed. The bill clarifies the joint roles of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. It also clarifies the ministerial powers to inspect and audit records of feeder associations and lenders. This will align it better with other legislation. The new text makes the ownership position for feeder associations clear, and it enables regulations that will define requirements that must be met for a producer to be recognized as a member of a feeder association. The bill also removes the requirement for the act to be renewed every five years, and it aligns with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

As noted earlier, creating opportunities is at the heart of this legislation, and this bill enables improved and new regulations that support program enhancements. For example, it allows the program to be expanded, extending what and who is covered. The appropriate regulations would accept agricultural partnerships and corporations as feeder association members. It would also enable extension of the feeder association program to include financing the processing and marketing of products from feeder association-owned livestock. Mr. Speaker, this has significant potential to encourage the development of producer-driven supply chains.

Another business benefit that would be supported by the new legislative framework would be improving cash flow. It would enable payments to be provided to members on a portion of the equity they have created in the livestock during the feeding period. Flexibility, of course, is often the hallmark of an effective program. As a government we continue to be focused on the accountability of the programs we support. That is why we proposed additional risk mitigation and protection measures. The new act would enable protecting a feeder association security deposit account for the benefit of all its members.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Together these administrative changes and additions will allow the program to meet the needs of industry in the current business climate. I'm confident that the livestock industry will be very pleased with this proposed act, Mr. Speaker. This bill is a product of extensive stakeholder consultation, which included feeder associations and other livestock industry groups as well as the financial institutions. We have already witnessed how this program has assisted our livestock sector. Currently 56 feeder associations representing over 2,000 Alberta producers are benefiting from the program. In 2008 over 19 per cent of Alberta's annual calf crop was financed under the program: 375,000 head of cattle valued at \$216 million. There has been over \$6.7 billion worth of cattle financed since the beginning of the program in 1936.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to continue with this program and look forward to improving its ability to make our agriculture industry even more competitive. The proposed legislation strengthens and expands financial services to our agriculture industry. It allows government to better meet the needs of the livestock feeding and marketing value chain, which will ultimately create a strong industry and a strong provincial economy.

I would therefore encourage all members of this House to support Bill 8 at second reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak at second reading to Bill 8, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act. I will admit that I'm subbing in for my

colleague who is the critic for Agriculture and Rural Development, so I hope I don't disappoint him.

I do have some questions and concerns around this act. I listened very carefully to what the sponsoring minister had to say, and the first question that comes to mind as I look at the act and I listen to what the minister says is: why did you repeal the previous act if all you were looking to do was sort of clarify and update a few things? That's not the usual process that I see this government follow. We usually have an amending act that goes back and adjusts the existing one but not to repeal it flat out and then to bring in a new act. I think, in fact, they might even have exactly the same name. The Feeder Associations Guarantee Act of 2000 is repealed, according to section 12, and we have the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act. Okay. So they even have exactly the same name. Now, that's interesting. I'm wondering what is the strategy behind that. That is an unusual process for the government to be involved in, and I'd like an answer to that, please.

#### 4:10

I also note that what's being covered here is only feeder livestock, not cow-calf operations. We've got a very specific piece of legislation that is about a loans program to a very specific sector and not even the entire sector, just a section of it. These are only cattle that are coming up through these feeder associations, as I said, feeder livestock, not cow-calf operations. That's also one of my reasons for hesitation.

I think that what is most concerning me from what I'm seeing in this act is that, essentially, two major things are being accomplished, and the minister mentioned both of these. One, it's essentially moving everything into regulations, and I'm seeing the same language and the same phrases that have become such a trademark of this government. It's a trademark about moving accountability and transparency and a sort of open process behind closed doors, where regulations can be worked out by the minister and by an order in council and then they pop out the other end, and if you search really hard, you might be able to find out what they are. But it removes the process from the discussion in this Chamber, which also means that it makes it harder for members of the public or even members that are concerned in this particular sector to have any input on the debate and even to be able to track what's going on.

The big difference I can see from repealing the previous act and putting this one in place is to be able to take everything that was in legislation and stuff it under regulation, and I am never going to support that. I am one of those who is now coming up to the end of my 12th year of service in this House, and I cannot say that I have seen very much benefit for the public and the citizens of Alberta from having a number of different programs and pieces of legislation which remove discussion in an open and public manner to behind closed doors by way of putting them into regulations. I do not believe that that has been a good move on behalf of this government, and they've done it over and over again and not to the benefit of citizens. So the first thing that I see happening with this legislation is moving it into regs.

The second major point – and, again, the minister raised it; he sees it as a plus, but I see it as a minus – is removing the five-year renewal. Again, that raises real issues for me because I think we're talking eventually about tens of millions of dollars that are used to guarantee these loans. The government itself in its press release notes that these changes are to reflect current economic times, but I don't know that removing the requirement for a five-year renewal is going to make anything more accountable. I think it makes it less so, and I think it weakens this program. I would like to know what the justification is for moving that other than to say that the minister

thinks this is great. I want to know what the technical details are that would give me a good reason to support this because I don't see it right now, and it's certainly not in the information that I've been supplied with.

I have some additional questions that I would like to have answered when we get to committee on this bill. I'm wondering if the government is anticipating that loans are going to be guaranteed exclusively for processing and marketing livestock products. You would remember that previously this was only for purchasing livestock, and now we have language that talks about marketing, and there's some other new language I heard the minister using. Basically, previously it was for purchasing livestock. Now I'm wondering if the government is looking at guaranteeing exclusively for the processing and marketing of the livestock and even separating that into different components, if you will.

I'd like also to have the minister give us some examples of specific cases where it would be necessary to extend the loan guarantee to processing and marketing of livestock products. I'll come back to that when I get to the end.

If the minister could also provide us with information about the benefits that the members of the feeder associations are most likely to anticipate seeing. I mean, does this benefit a smaller operator? Is it mostly going to benefit a larger scale operation? What members of feeder associations will benefit most from these changes?

Finally, has the minister or the department done any studies at all to anticipate how these changes may increase the number of defaulted loans and the cost to government as a result of guaranteeing these loans?

As someone that represents an urban riding, I'm looking to see how I go back and justify this to my constituents. That's why I'm asking the questions about . . . [interjection] Well, the minister looks confused. Don't you expect that legislation would be justifiable to all citizens in Alberta or just to the special ones that somehow qualify under his determination? He should be able to make this legislation make sense to every single citizen in the province. That's his job, and I'm looking forward to seeing him do it.

The major difference with this is that it seems to me there are two added components of this production line, if you want to call it, being added in and being made eligible for a loan. To me this starts to sound like an expansion of what we had before. Before it was about purchasing them, I think, and now we're talking about marketing and processing. Those, to me, are two more components along an assembly line, if I may, if you'll allow me to describe it that way. That starts me thinking that we're actually starting to be funding these operators for additional parts of this that they weren't funded for before, that they couldn't get loans for before.

So if this is part of a larger scheme where we're looking for value-added and we're trying to encourage more value-added processing, okay – fair enough – but I'd like to see the minister be able to lay this out. What it looks like to this city slicker is that we used to grant a loan for the purchasing of livestock and that now we're talking about also granting loans for marketing of this livestock and also for processing of it, and those are very different things than the purchasing.

I also understand that these feeder associations are essentially co-ops, and I tend to be supportive of the co-op movement because it's a group of people. Contrary to the way a number of people like to describe this province as though it was all these mavericks, these lone cowboys that showed up on their single horse and somehow, without working together, managed to produce this province, it's simply not true. What it came from was groups of people that chose to work together to help each other to build things, and of course the ultimate example of that is a barn raising.



We have a long and very proud history of a co-op movement here in this province, and it strikes me that that's, in fact, what these feeder associations are supposed to be. But once you start to get into loan guarantees and particularly loan guarantees where all of the criteria can be decided by the government behind closed doors, by a minister, and then executed through an order in council, it starts to cause me great concern.

I am not willing to support this bill at this point. I will look forward to hearing the rest of the information that is forthcoming from this minister, and if he is able to explain it in a way that the citizens of Edmonton-Centre can understand it, well, good on him. If he can't, then perhaps there's a problem with this bill.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill in second reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:20

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be quite brief. Like my hon. colleague the Member for Edmonton-Centre, I too consider myself a city slicker. However, each day in this Assembly I attempt to grab the bull by the horns but often sort of am the recipient of the tail end of things. With that delightful analogy I'll continue.

A concern I have with regard to this bill is the concern of the government tending to move back into being in the business of being in business and, in that being in business, selecting winners and losers, and I'll refer to that a little bit later. We're in a time when we're saying to the world: don't get protectionist. We've gone to battle with groups down south like R-CALF, who have tried to limit exports of Alberta beef south. Here we are potentially setting a dangerous precedent of subsidizing to a fairly large extent through loans Alberta cattle, and hopefully that won't be a problem when it comes to GATT and free trade and so on. I'm hoping that the minister is much more knowledgeable about the protectionist forces we may face when these cattle are ready to be processed. If they're just simply going to be turned into beef in the box, then we probably won't have to deal with those problems.

While I'm a city slicker, I have a degree of background or at least experience in and around areas. For example, my wife's cousins were operating a 9,000-head feedlot in Boise, Idaho. Their location was right in the area along the Owyhee range, which our Alberta hero Ian Tyson sings about. My wife's cousin Sheila Lincoln is married to Bob Lincoln, who in turn is related to Abraham Lincoln. He ran a very successful business pretty much on his own without subsidies right up until the time that the recession hit. Then what he found was that in trying to sell his business and potentially look forward to retirement, the individuals who would potentially have bought his feedlot couldn't find the financing.

I know that part of Bill 8, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act, is finding the financing for organizations, for feeder co-ops. I'm sure that based on the quantity of the cattle that these organizations own, there are a significant number of feedlots involved, so the magnitude is extremely important.

I also have referenced in this House my uncle, Dave Chase, who married Patsy Cross. The Cross family, as I'm sure most Albertans know, were one of the founders of cattle business in Alberta, and also that same Cross family is connected with the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. My uncle David through marriage inherited the beginnings of an Angus herd, which he built up and then passed along to my cousin, unfortunately, who bought cattle from the Saskatchewan farmer who was later traced to have BSE, and his whole Angus herd was culled. Now, I believe that he received compensation from the province, but what I'm concerned about:

even though we're getting a much better handle on feed and even though we're getting a much better handle on testing for BSE, getting a much better handle on age verification, which is especially important for export, we're putting out the potential of a lot of taxpayers' money to promote a singular industry.

In terms of other experience that I believe is relative to this bill and the idea of supporting livestock producers, my wife's family is from the Ottawa Valley, and my father-in-law operated a very successful dairy farm out in Bells Corners. Again, he did it, basically, on his own. He worked off the farm in order to get the money to make the farm successful, and he wasn't reliant on loans. He was very much a self-made man. I'm proud of those connections.

I'm also concerned when the government, in the best interests of supporting agriculture, puts out loan guarantees. Look at what happened with a number of beef producers who invested an awful lot of money into Rancher's Beef so that there would be a Canadian competitor in Alberta that could potentially go head-to-head or toe-to-toe or, if not, at least give ranchers a choice of not having to take their beef to American-owned slaughterhouses. Rancher's Beef went belly up, and the government lost a significant portion, millions of dollars of taxpayer subsidies and grants to that organization. So I have concerns there.

The government during the height of the BSE epidemic compensated the greatest amount of compensation in terms of large chunks of millions of dollars, \$32 million to one particular outfit, I believe, an American feedlot. The justification was that those American feedlots, which slaughtered their own cattle first, incidentally, had large numbers, and we were compensating based on a per cattle situation. A lot of the smaller producers did not receive the compensation. In a number of other cases they were overcompensated, and now they're having to pay back those loans. I'm hoping that Bill 8, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act, has considerably greater oversight in terms of tracking the money, and hopefully people don't get in such debt in terms of the loans that they've been allowed to take out that they suffer the circumstance of repossession, which seems to be occurring more and more. It's primarily failed housing in the States where repossession starts happening, and it's going to start happening here, north of the 49th.

I am also concerned, as I mentioned earlier, about picking winners and losers. We have decided through this Bill 8, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act, that the winners are going to be the beef producers, the collectives, the co-operatives. To the minister of agriculture, who is much more knowledgeable of these areas than myself: has there been a degree or a percentage of equivalency in terms of compensation or support or loan guarantees for cow-calf operators? I mean, that's where it all begins, obviously. Even I as a city slicker know that.

I'm also concerned, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre pointed out, about one more example of moving legislation into regulation. What are we hiding? Why is it being left up to the minister, at the discretion of the minister, whoever they may be at the time, to determine what the regulations will be? If we're going to be transparent and accountable and if we're going to be able to follow each one of those dollars that gets loaned out and repaid in a timely fashion, then accountability is of the absolute essence. If it's just simply buried in regulation, why should taxpayers from Calgary-Varsity, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre pointed out, have faith in something that is murky through its location and regulation?

4:30

I'm hoping that the cloud of potential suspicion or just simply the fact that we don't know what the answers are in terms of the auditing

process, the loan guarantees – how will we know how these subsidies will be reacted to by other producers, whether they be American or European? We seem to be constantly in a battle over the amount of subsidies, and considering how important the beef trade is to this province, we'd better get it right. Obviously, the minister felt that we hadn't gotten it right before because he repealed the entire act and substituted it with Bill 8. I look forward to the explanations. Turning this city slicker into a better-informed Albertan will be much appreciated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have Standing Order 29(2)(a) available. Did the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod catch my eye?

**Mr. Berger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like it if Calgary-Varsity could clarify for me and for this House what relevance Cousin David, Uncle David, married to whom, married where, Boise, Idaho, and all these other things actually have to this bill, the intent of this bill, and the Alberta cattle-feeding industry. Basically anything? I fail to get where the connections come in here. Could you clarify that, please?

**Mr. Chase:** I welcome this opportunity to proceed with my family history and connections. What I was trying to establish is that although I'm a city slicker, I do have some limited knowledge of the beef industry. I have worked on farms. For example – a family extension here – when we were stationed at Namao air base, I worked on a mixed farm. The Croziers were very good friends of my mother and father. I participated in feeding the cattle. I participated in bringing in the bales.

What I was trying to establish in my family narrative is my ability to have a relationship to this bill and to beef production and my concerns for the well-being of not only my own family members who have been engaged in beef and cattle and dairying, but I want to see Albertans' interests well protected within this bill. I don't want to see whole herds, as was the case with my uncle, being culled. I want to see that the oversight within this bill is going to not only subsidize and support farmers and ranchers but that it's going to protect them.

I thank you for the opportunity to clarify my family experience.

**Mr. Berger:** Well, I have to say that I feel no more enlightened now than I did three minutes ago. In saying that, I appreciate the name-dropping and all the other comments, but would it not be more productive to actually study the bill, the intent of the bill, and what effect it actually has rather than all that? I rest with those comments.

**Mr. Chase:** That's a very fair comment. Unfortunately, because it's being moved from legislation to regulation, I'll never have an opportunity to know the exact details and, therefore, not be able to debate them.

**The Speaker:** Are there additional comments or questions?

Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill 8. I also appreciated the opportunity that the minister, through the Member for Battle River-Wainwright, and the minister's staff gave me to get a briefing on the bill. Thank you very much. It makes things easier at our end.

I think I've got a sense of what this bill is intended to do. It's intended to expand loan guarantees to members of feeder associa-

tions to get them further through the production cycle of beef and not just to support the purchase and then initial sale of the animals but to support the process through processing and marketing. I can see the logic of that. You know, the system has worked pretty well. The feeder associations have been around for a lifetime, a long lifetime. Not every cattle rancher uses them. That's fine. If they want to join, I don't think it's that difficult. If they don't want to and they can find their own financing elsewhere, they don't have to.

Also, as a couple of my colleagues have pointed out, the idea of supporting a co-operative is a good idea. The history of co-operatives on the landscape of the prairies is very deep and very broad. I think it's interesting that this government is prepared to support co-ops in this case but in many other cases doesn't seem to. I wish there was more support for housing co-operatives, for example, or for utility – power and gas – co-ops and a whole range of other ones, but that's a different issue.

Our concerns with this have been mentioned before, and I'm just going to mention them briefly. I think that, speaking as the critic for this area, we'd like to support this bill, but we need some reassurances, thinking about this as a liability that's being expanded for the citizens of Alberta, for the government of Alberta. Both the members for Edmonton-Centre and Calgary-Varsity have raised the issue of oversight and accountability, and I think that's a real concern. As the scale of the loan guarantees grows, how large is that liability going to get? How will that be disclosed? If and when there are defaults and when that guarantee is called, as it occasionally is – I mean, that's the purpose of it – how will that be disclosed to the public and explained to the public, who, after all, will end up covering that loss? These are concerns and questions we have. I hope the minister takes them seriously because I think we would be speaking on behalf of every citizen of Alberta when raising those sorts of concerns.

The vagueness of what's going on here is also a worry. You know, there is the possibility for abuse when things are left so vague. I'll try to walk the minister through a possible situation, and maybe later in debate, in committee, he can respond. If I were a member of a feeder association and got a loan guarantee to acquire a herd and I sold those animals to a slaughterhouse, as things stand right now, at that point the slaughterhouse would have to pay, and the loan guarantee is over as soon as I sell the herd. Under the new system the guarantee would continue through the processing of the animals and meat and right through to the marketing. That marketing might be in Medicine Hat, or it might be in Tokyo, or it could be in Mexico City. We don't know.

My concern is that the bill could in effect be a prop-up for processors and marketers to handle their cash-flow problems. What we're really doing here may not be supporting the producer but supporting, let's say, the slaughterhouse because the slaughterhouse, then, doesn't really need to pay the producer right away because the producer's loan is still guaranteed. So is this really a backdoor way of propping up cash-flow issues for processors and for marketers? I'm not just trying to make up imaginary problems here, Mr. Minister. I'm just trying to understand. Is the effect of this bill to make life easier for the ranchers, or is it to make it easier for the processors or the marketers?

4:40

Other issues, of course, arise. What's the time frame? How long might it take for the marketing to occur and for the conclusion of this life cycle to be reached if we're dealing with beef that may be going to any corner of the world? Those are all issues that through a loan guarantee the taxpayers are going to be on the hook for, and I don't think it's unreasonable to be asking on behalf of the taxpayer for an explanation on that.

I think the other issues to a large extent have been raised by other members in the Assembly. As I say, nothing would be more satisfying than for all of us to see a more diverse, broadly based, secure, stable beef sector in Alberta. This bill might help organic beef develop. It might help very specialized sectors in the beef industry develop. We'd all love that, but we'd like to know the full story here. So I'm going to count on the minister to in later stages of debate help us acquire that full story.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I would ask my hon. colleague if he is as concerned, as has been formerly mentioned by his colleague from Edmonton-Centre and myself, about moving from legislation to regulation. Is that a concern when it comes to transparency, accountability to this House and to Albertans in general?

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of my beefs with this bill is that it moves a lot of items from legislation to regulation. Yes, we are steering in the wrong direction. You know, I won't pursue those anymore, but it's part of a trend. I think that we need to be alert to what the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar described a few days ago as the quiet overthrowing of this Assembly by the cabinet. That's what we're seeing here, and we see it over and over and over. The legitimate topics for debate and decision and accountability of this Assembly are taken out of the hands of this Assembly into the hands of cabinet. This is just another example, and of course it goes without saying that that is a concern of mine.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Others?

Shall I, then, call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for participation?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That would be great. I'm pleased to stand and speak to Bill 8, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act. I want to just say a few words to start with about feeder associations. Feeder associations were set up to help ranchers who may not be able to afford their own livestock for whatever reason and to continue them in business. All of the farmers that we spoke to believe that these local feeder associations play an important role in the industry and that they should continue. Obviously, by providing the credit or guaranteeing the loans that people involved in this business need, we ensure that the industry remains as stable as possible under the difficult circumstances that they now face. Certainly, it is an important part of the cattle business, and I think that it needs to continue.

The basis of the act is quite simple. It allows the government to secure or guarantee the loans that would be made to a feeder association. It requires that a guaranteed loan can only be made to a feeder association that is incorporated.

I think the concerns that have been raised about the role of regulation in this legislation and other pieces of legislation are valid and a continuing concern that more and more power is in fact being placed in the hands of cabinet and cabinet ministers and less here in the Legislature.

I do want to say a few things about feeder cattle. This is, I think, a broad principle with respect to the operation of the industry that is touched on by this act, so I think that it's relevant here. That has to

do with the role of very large packing plants. There are just a couple of very large ones that pack about 80 to 90 per cent of the cattle in this province and a significant majority of that in the country as a whole.

One of the things that I find interesting is that the new President of the United States, Mr. Obama, is proposing to implement a ban on packer-owned cattle. This is what his website says:

When meatpackers own livestock they can manipulate prices and discriminate against independent farmers. Strengthen anti-monopoly laws and strengthen producer protections to ensure independent farmers have fair access to markets, control over their production decisions, and transparency in prices.

What happens – and we've seen this in this province; certainly it became apparent during the whole BSE crisis and the government bailout package, that ended up largely in the pockets of the two biggest producers – is that those producers, by maintaining their own herds in feedlots, can control the prices that they have to pay for cattle. When prices get too high and they're having to pay too much for the cattle, they just bring more of their own cattle into the market, and the price comes down. So they're able to manipulate prices at the expense of the small producer, Mr. Speaker. I think that that's an issue that this government needs to grapple with.

We would propose that the government follow the suggestion of the American President and implement a ban on packer-owned livestock. I think that that would help the small producers as much as any of the provisions in this particular bill.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that we will be supporting this bill. We think that the feeder associations are an important institution within our cattle industry and will help producers stay in business, have some stability, and have access to the capital that they need.

One of the concerns that has been raised with us, however, is that corporations can join the feeder associations, companies like Cargill and so on. I think that that is causing considerable concern among small producers, who are concerned about the role that these companies play in the market already and the power that they have. Mr. Speaker, in principle we believe that the policy of the government should be to continue the support for small operations and for the family farm. That is not their policy. They have a policy, in our estimation, of encouraging large-scale production and corporate control of agriculture. That's not where we want to go. But I think that with respect to that matter, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act is still something which is generally positive and something that we are prepared to support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Are there additional speakers who wish to participate?

Shall I call on the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to close the debate? The hon. minister.

4:50

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I got quite an education myself here this afternoon. Kind of surprising. Clearly, the hon. opposition people don't understand the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act. The feeder association does relate very much to the small operators and the cow-calf producers, by and large. In fact, these are most of the people that do participate in the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act.

I'm quite amazed how the two people talked about their 12th year in the House – the one on this side of the House was so positive, and the one on the other side of the House was so negative – how that could happen in that 12-year period, how people could get into that process.

I listened to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, and I think I probably looked surprised about Edmonton-Centre. One of the hon. members said that he was a city slicker. I guess I'm a country bumpkin because I didn't realize there were any feeder associations set up in Edmonton-Centre, but perhaps there are. I'll have to check that out. I wouldn't know.

I was quite enlightened and heartened to listen to my opposition critic over there because he did spend some time to look at what the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act is all about, obtain an understanding of where we're at. Some of the questions you ask are very legitimate, and in Committee of the Whole we will address those ones, particularly the ones you talk about with the packers perhaps not paying and whatnot. There are safeguards in there that we can handle.

The hon. member from the third party, certainly I can tell him that some of his original comments were very legitimate and insightful. This has nothing to do with the large operations or, perhaps, a whole lot to do with the President of the United States, this Feeder Associations Guarantee Act, but I can appreciate that.

One thing I would like to touch on, the default rate on the act to this point. I'd be trapped if I said the number, but I think it's less than 1 per cent. It's quite amazing, to be honest with you.

We certainly will go through the answers, check out the questions, and in committee address these.

With that, I would like to move that we pass the bill on.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

#### Bill 14

#### Carbon Capture and Storage Funding Act

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise on behalf of the Minister of Energy to move second reading of Bill 14, the Carbon Capture and Storage Funding Act.

Mr. Speaker, this act will expedite the design, construction, and operation of three to five large carbon capture and storage, or CCS, projects in Alberta, projects that will demonstrate the effectiveness and safety of CCS. The \$2 billion is an investment in our environment and our future and a continued signal of our commitment to the responsible development of Alberta's resources. CCS is being done around the world and is a proven technology. It may not be a technology that is well known in North America, but it is an evolving science that is used around the world.

During U.S. President Obama's visit to Canada in February he reiterated his support for our two countries working together through co-operation and co-ordination of research and demonstration of CCS projects. President Obama knows that this technology is key to developing large-scale CCS projects. To illustrate this point, one need only look at a unique Canadian-U.S. joint venture. EnCana's Weyburn project pipelines CO<sub>2</sub> from Beulah, North Dakota, to its aging oil reserves in Saskatchewan. Since 2000 there has been a 65 per cent increase in oil production in what was really a depleted reserve.

CCS is not just in the domain of North America. The European Commission has proposed up to 12 large-scale CCS demonstration projects. These projects have been endorsed by the European Council. Contrary to what you may have heard in the media, there are other full-scale CO<sub>2</sub> projects operating throughout the world. In the North Sea StatoilHydro's Sleipner project has been injecting since 1996. StatoilHydro also has been injecting at its Snøhvit project since 2007. The British Petroleum Salah project in Algeria

has been operating since 2004. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the notion that this technology is unproven is unfounded.

Despite the current uncertainty in the global economy long-term forecasts estimated that oil production will grow from about 1.4 million barrels per day now to 3 million more by 2016, and despite improvements in oil sands development and reductions in carbon emissions intensity, as production levels increase, so will emissions. The question is not if oil will be developed, because world oil supplies will be developed, Mr. Speaker. It's a question of how oil can be developed in cleaner ways. Carbon capture and storage can answer that question, scientifically proven technology that will reduce carbon emissions from large-scale operations like oil sands extractions, value-added upgrading, and coal-fired generation. Carbon capture and storage will significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. This is an initiative that all Albertans can be proud of. As a safe and secure supplier of energy with a growing presence on the global stage, our focus on carbon capture and storage is not only good for Alberta, our investors; it's also essential to our future.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. Industry, government, and consumers need to tackle this problem together. We need to invest in cleaner energy technologies and new and greener sources of energy. We need to reduce emissions and reduce energy use. Alberta's economy and, frankly, much of Canada's, in fact, is largely reliant on energy development. This act will give Alberta a very powerful tool with which to meet the unique set of challenges we face and further cement Alberta's leadership in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you. In debate, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to rise to discuss this particular bill, Bill 14, Carbon Capture and Storage Funding Act. I am certain that this will be a highly contentious bill. It's a topic that's highly contentious in the public, and that's healthy. I think debate is good. I expect that if the information coming from the government is okay, we'll probably support this bill. I don't expect that everybody in the Legislature will, and that's great. Such is democracy.

I will say right off the bat that one of the matters that complicates our support of this expenditure is the not unrelated matter of the royalty structure for the oil sands. I know – and I'll talk about this in a few minutes – that a lot of the efforts around carbon capture and storage are actually going to go to coal-fired power plants, which are a legitimate priority. Nonetheless, one focus of this is the oil sands. I'll be straight in saying that when we are giving royalty deals – the corporate filings of shareholders in oil sands companies indicate a worth of tens of billions of dollars – when we're giving concessions on that level, then it's pretty hard for us to support a bill that's spending another \$2 billion in subsidies to the energy industry. I would much prefer and be much more comfortable if we had a system in which we were collecting the full value of the royalty resource for the people of Alberta. Then I would be more comfortable in defending a bill that has up to a \$2 billion price tag on it. As it is, it's tougher to defend morally. It's tougher to defend politically. It's tougher to defend financially when this comes on top of massive royalty breaks. The government makes it hard for people to support it when it structures things this way.

5:00

I want to run through a few of the facts. The Minister of Environment touched on some of these. There are debates around the viability of the technology. Probably all of us in this Assembly rely on a range of experts. I don't think any of us here are expert in the

technologies of carbon capture and sequestration. The people whom we have consulted tell us that the technology is viable, that, as the minister says, it's proven in a range of settings around the world in a number of countries and that its viability and economic – well, its viability will only increase, and the costs will decrease. I know that there are people around who question the viability of the technology. Again, that can be debated, but we have gone out of the way to consult a number of people who are disinterested, who have no financial vested interest in whether the technology works or not, and they're telling us that, yes, this is viable technology.

I also want to make the point about the security of the sequestration because we've had this discussion in our caucus. If we are pumping vast millions of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into underground formations, how do we know it's going to stay there? How do we know that in 10 or 20 or 50 years it's not just going to start re-entering the atmosphere? That's, again, a legitimate question. I guess there are a couple of responses to that. One is that there are vast amounts of all kinds of things that are dangerous to humanity that are trapped underground and are kept there. An obvious example would be sour gas. Sour gas, when it's underground in those formations, stays there at very high pressures indefinitely until we actually deliberately seek it out. So that's some reassurance that when the CO<sub>2</sub> is pumped into the ground, it will also stay there, and when those wells are properly capped, they can be successfully sealed indefinitely. In addition, of course, there are chemical processes that occur; gradually the carbon dioxide actually bonds with minerals in the rocks and forms carbonates and other materials that will stay safely underground. So we're prepared to accept our advice that the technology is viable and that the CO<sub>2</sub> is secure and move forward from there.

I think it is worth trying to shift this debate a little bit away from the oil sands to where the largest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions still occur, and that's in the coal-fired power plants. Alberta is very fortunate. Our coal-fired power plants, particularly concentrated west of Edmonton in the Wabamun area, are also in the area of some massive and now largely depleted oil reserves, oil fields: the Pembina field, the Devon field, and others. Somehow I wish that the public in Alberta at least would understand that this isn't just about the oil sands. This is about capturing emissions from coal-fired power plants, which are single emission sources. They're fairly, relatively speaking, easy to work with, and they're close to viable sequestration sites, so that makes this more workable.

I think it's regrettable and a bit of misinformation on the part of the public that this issue is thought of strictly in terms of the oil sands because somehow the coal-fired power plants in Alberta seem to continually get under the radar when, in fact, they remain the largest emitters of CO<sub>2</sub>. We understand that that's where the biggest impacts are going to be and fully support that. Of course, that doesn't mean that the oil sands should be left out of this. While they are not yet the largest source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Alberta, they are the most rapidly growing source. That needs to be reduced, and technologies developed through this program will help address that problem.

I think a point that has to be made, if for no other reason than that at least we need to think about it, is that because the largest benefit of this will be to the coal-fired power generators, this really amounts to a subsidy to electricity consumers, and the largest electricity consumers in Alberta by far are big businesses. There's issue upon issue layered here with deregulation and other matters, but I think that what we are really looking at here is a subsidy to power consumers.

I think it would be interesting to at least consider an alternative approach, which would be to tag a levy on power rates so that those

who use the most electricity paid the most. Rather than the taxpayer at large being on the hook for up to \$2 billion, the people who are actually using the electricity and therefore driving the emissions pay the bill. I think that would be at least worth a debate in this Assembly. I don't know what the levy would have to be to pay for this, but I think it would be worth working out and looking at a different approach.

In the end we have to ask ourselves: what is in the best interests of the public and of the people of Alberta? In this case that's not an easy question to answer. We're here as taxpayers who are looking at a bill of \$2 billion over the next decade or more. Obviously, we have to look at it from that perspective. We're here as people whose economy depends more than almost anywhere in the world on fossil fuels, whether that's coal or oil sands or conventional petroleum. So we have to look at it from that perspective.

We're also here as citizens of the planet, a planet that is increasingly endangered because of global warming. I think that that ultimately, for me at least, trumps the other concerns because long after the world has moved to other fuels, what we are doing to our atmosphere in our lifetime will echo through the future for potentially a thousand years and shape the lives of countless generations. They will be living in a different world than the one we inherited because of the very things we've done. When I think of it in those terms, I think, you know, that we need to do whatever we can to address this issue. That \$2 billion spread out over 10 years is not an unreasonable investment to make in protecting our planet. Ultimately, that is the perspective that informs my support for this sort of initiative.

I was able to discuss this issue in a briefing with some officials from the minister's office and department. One of the issues I raised was around intellectual property. We're putting \$2 billion into this. It will be going to undoubtedly create all kinds of patentable processes and equipment and a significant investment in intellectual property, and some of the questions I have are: who's going to benefit from that? How's that going to be managed? Will we as investors in these patents then reap some kind of benefit? Will we get a royalty from that? Will we be able to sell that intellectual property? Actually, it led to an interesting discussion and reframed my thinking about that.

I understand that the government's plan – and I hope that the minister will ultimately address this – is that it will be kind of an open architecture approach to the intellectual property. In other words, whatever is developed in terms of intellectual property will be made freely available to anybody in the world to adopt. Actually, when I think that through, I think that may be a brilliant idea.

#### 5:10

I want to at least discuss that. Particularly, if the Norwegians and the Americans and the Japanese and everybody else who are working on this also share all that intellectual property, then who benefits? Well, humanity benefits. The planet benefits. If we get a really great idea that can benefit the Norwegians on this, let them have it. If they have a really good idea that can benefit us, well, we'll draw on that as well. I hope that comes up for some discussion at later stages of this bill. We need to hash that one through and figure out if that really is the best way. It's at least worth some serious thought.

I also think that it's worth noting with the enhanced oil recovery, which the minister alluded to in his opening comments, the fact that tired, old, depleted conventional fields can actually be rejuvenated through this process. That has a range of benefits, including increased royalties for the citizens of Alberta and extending the life of conventional fuel fields, which have lower environmental impacts often than unconventional energy sources.

The cost of this grabs everybody's attention. I just saw in the last day or two the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in concert undoubtedly with the New Democrats – I know how much Danielle Smith and the New Democrats work together; maybe it's just coincidence – urging the government to stop this expenditure. Again, given the financial times, given a government that is heading into deficit, that's worth a debate. I think one of the important things is that people are informed that this is an expenditure that's going to occur over more than 10 years. The \$2 billion will go out in phases over more than a decade. It's not a single expenditure at once; it's phased over many years. I think that that needs to be put out to the public.

The public will also want to know and for very good reasons the selection process for the projects that will get funding. How are these partners chosen? Who will the partners be? How much are they going to contribute? What are the deals? Will they agree to an open-architecture approach to the intellectual property? If EPCOR, for example, turns out to be a partner and in research that is supported in part by them and in part through this funding they come up with some spectacular intellectual property, are they prepared to share that openly or not? Will that be a condition of this funding? What will be the conditions of this funding? I hope that in the course of the debate the government is forthcoming in addressing a number of those issues.

I think that this is the kind of bill that could swing either way for this government. Right now I think it's very much hanging, with the public undecided. Do they see this as yet more massive subsidy particularly for the oil sands industry, which, they quite rightly see, doesn't need any more subsidy? On the other hand, do they see this as a legitimate gesture in addressing profound climate change issues? The way we conduct the debate in this Assembly will shape the public view, and I think we all need to keep that in mind.

Mr. Speaker, I've tried to outline a whole range of issues. I've tried to plant some thoughts in the mind of members who are here today and in the mind of government officials, who, I hope, will read *Hansard* carefully and help the minister come back and inform debate in Committee of the Whole.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move adjournment.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Bill 15 Dunvegan Hydro Development Act**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour today to rise to move second reading of Bill 15, the Dunvegan Hydro Development Act.

In December of 2008 a joint review panel of the Natural Resources Conservation Board, the Alberta Utilities Commission, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency reviewed a proponent's power proposal on the Peace River just west of the Dunvegan bridge, and they found that that project was indeed in the public interest and should proceed.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

That triggers a legislative requirement on our part, and that legislative requirement flows from our own Hydro and Electric Energy Act. As soon as a panel prepares a report and submits it to the minister, section 9 of our act requires the minister to prepare a

bill which allows the AUC to authorize construction of the plant. The commission cannot authorize construction of the plant without the passage of that bill and cannot do so, in fact, until that bill receives royal assent. The bill in question, of course, is Bill 15, that's before us now. There's an additional provision in the Hydro and Electric Energy Act. Under section 10 the commission has to authorize operation once the plant is constructed, and they cannot do so until they are granted the authority to do so through an order in council.

Bill 15 has two clauses in it. The first one grants authority to the AUC to authorize the commencement of construction. The second section authorizes the AUC to approve operation, obviously once construction is completed.

Mr. Speaker, this legislative requirement that flows from our Hydro and Electric Energy Act comes from a time when hydro projects were perhaps controversial in our country. There was James Bay in Quebec and the Bennett dam and the site C dam in B.C., in fact others around the world. People came to realize that the construction of dams comes, in fact, with environmental consequences, as does any form of power generation, so there was some controversy. Even in Alberta we had some controversy around hydro projects, and it was thought at that time that projects should come back to the Legislature so that the Legislature itself could grant approval to the Alberta Utilities Commission. So that's why the legislation, in my understanding of it, is structured that way.

It's important to recognize that in this particular case although we have that legislative requirement, we're not talking about a dam here. This is a run-of-the-river project that does not have the significant environmental consequences of a dam, a much smaller project with a much smaller footprint. As I mentioned, the joint review panel, in fact, found that this project was in the public interest.

It's also important to say two things, Mr. Speaker. One, the bill does not remove any of the regulatory authority of the Alberta Utilities Commission. All we're doing is granting that body the authority to approve construction and, eventually, operation once all of their conditions have been met. Secondly, although, as I point out, this particular project is small – it's a run-of-the-river, not a dam – this bill only addresses the Dunvegan project. If in the future another hydro project were to come along, a dam perhaps, we would again be required to go through the same process. We're not proposing that we remove the requirement for all future projects. It only relates to the Dunvegan project.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a good-news story for Alberta. It'll broaden our renewable energy portfolio. It's a low-impact project, and it adds to an already significantly large alternative energy proposal. I'm really keen on it.

In closing, I want to maybe congratulate the company. This project has been on the books for a very long time. The company was consulting and working with municipalities back before 2004, when I left the Peace River town council. I was a councillor at the time. Well before then the company was out consulting and working with locals. They've met whatever requirements, mitigation requirements or public consultation requirements, they had to in order to pass the joint review panel. I know it's a tremendous amount of work and expenditure on that company's part.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I'll conclude my remarks, and I look forward to the debate on Bill 15.

5:20

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to discuss Bill 15, the Dunvegan Hydro Development Act, in second reading. I appreciated the opportunity to get some information about this matter from the Member for Peace River and some officials. This is a pretty interesting initiative, and I think it's worth very careful observation. The member in his opening comments talked briefly about the impact of hydro dams, and I think it's worth reflecting on that.

Many, many times I've been by Lake Abraham in the Rockies west of Nordegg. It's a spectacular lake. There's no doubt about it. But it wiped out what was a beautiful valley and what was also a very sacred spot for our First Nations people there. It has had benefits as well as hydro. It helps with flood control downstream, including in Edmonton. Nonetheless, you know, the member is right that the idea that hydro dams are somehow benign is a bit out of date now.

I think we understand more of their impact, and unfortunately we've had to learn that sometimes in more painful ways than with the Bighorn dam. An example would be the Bennett dam on the Peace River. Last August I was up in Fort Chip and flew in and flew out, as you have to do to get to Fort Chip in the summer, over the Peace delta. That was at one time the largest freshwater delta in the world. I don't know if it still is, but it has suffered profoundly, and it has shrunk because of the effects of the Bennett dam way upstream in B.C.

So this feels like we're moving to, no pun intended, the next generation of hydro generation. This is a technology that has been demonstrated around the world, and I hope it continues to develop. I very much support the idea of Alberta shifting even this little bit of its power supply away from fossil fuels to hydro in this case. I'd love to see a very aggressive campaign to reduce demand for electricity. That's another issue. I don't know why this government doesn't get more serious about reducing demand, about supply-side management on power supply. Anyway, that's a different issue. This is a little bit of an advance in terms of bringing a zero emissions or near zero emissions project to Alberta's electrical grid.

The Dunvegan site is beautiful. It's genuinely beautiful. I think many of us here will have crossed that bridge. It's a glorious drive. I also note in the background that there will be an adjustment to the ferry that runs in that area. I'm glad to hear that because two summers ago, I think, I drove along the Peace River Valley to that ferry, and it's something worth preserving. It really is.

I'm glad to see that all of those issues will be considered in this. I look forward to what I hope will be a straightforward debate. I think that there might be a question or two. I'm not going to raise them right now because I want to do a little bit more background research, but I expect that this bill will move through fairly straightforwardly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the chance to speak on Bill 15.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the hon. Member for Peace River wish to close debate?

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

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

## Bill 18

### Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to move for second reading Bill 18, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009.

Mr. Speaker, similar to Bill 1 from last year, Bill 18 will ensure that Alberta's legislation and the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, otherwise known as TILMA, are consistent. This particular bill is nuts-and-bolts technical legislation but, nonetheless, extremely important for Alberta. It's important because it is the last piece of legislation before Canada's most comprehensive interprovincial trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement becomes fully in force April 1, 2009.

TILMA is a bilateral interprovincial trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement between Alberta and British Columbia. Its goal is simple: make life easier for Albertans by removing the duplication, overlap, and unnecessary regulatory differences between our two provinces that have evolved over decades and have negatively affected our competitiveness, both domestically and internationally.

The agreement itself was signed in April 2006 by the two provinces and came into effect for certain sectors in April 2007, with full implementation on April 1 of this year. It means seamless access for businesses and workers in both provinces to a large range of opportunities across all sectors, including energy, transportation, and agriculture. For example, Mr. Speaker, a business incorporated in one province will be deemed registered in the other if it wants. There is no residency required, no added administration, reporting, or fees.

Alberta and B.C. companies will have increased opportunities to bid on government contracts in both provinces, particularly in engineering, architectural, and related services, which will be in greater demand as infrastructure construction projects get under way. More importantly, these firms will compete on a level playing field regardless of whether the company is based in Alberta or British Columbia. If they are qualified to do the work, they will have an equal opportunity to bid on these contracts, whether they are from Alberta or B.C. Mr. Speaker, this is good news in these challenging times, when companies will be faced with looking outside of their traditional markets for business opportunities. As well, all skilled tradespersons like plumbers or welders or highly trained professionals like nurses or teachers certified in Alberta or B.C. will be able to move between these provinces and keep working without having to go through extensive recertification or retraining.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 18 itself is critical to Alberta in order to fully implement this groundbreaking interprovincial trade agreement, one that is already a catalyst for how Canada and all provinces look at interprovincial trade and labour mobility. It is because of TILMA that every province, territory, and the federal government are working towards full labour mobility across all provinces under the pan-Canadian agreement on internal trade. The TILMA model for full labour mobility has essentially been incorporated into the national agreement, and that was a very significant development last December.

The AIT has been around since 1995, but it has begun to show some real progress within this last year largely because of what Alberta and B.C. have done under TILMA. The AIT is also being amended to contain an effective dispute resolution mechanism,

which, Mr. Speaker, is another concept that the TILMA introduced into the domestic trade context.

Bill 18 is an omnibus piece of legislation that amends existing statutes and ensures that provincial legislation and the TILMA align. Most of these amendments deal with jurisdictional provisions like residency requirements. Alberta and British Columbia agreed under the TILMA that residents of both provinces would be treated equally. Just because someone happened to reside in one province, they would not be barred from accessing opportunities in the other. Again, this is good news for Alberta businesses and workers.

In total, 11 acts will be amended, Mr. Speaker. For example, the Marriage Act will be amended to allow a resident of B.C. to be appointed as a temporary marriage commissioner. At the moment only an Albertan is eligible. So if you happen to have an uncle who's a marriage commissioner living in Victoria, once this legislation is passed, he will be able to come to Alberta and perform your marriage should you need that. The same would be true for an Alberta marriage commissioner performing the ceremony in British Columbia.

5:30

Bill 18 will also amend the Charitable Fundraising Act to provide extraprovincial charitable organizations and businesses the option of keeping deposits and records in their province of residence, minimizing additional administrative duties and paperwork.

Other changes include amending the Agriculture Financial Services Act. The act may currently leave the impression that commercial loans can only be made to Alberta firms. That's not the case. The change will make it clear that provided the operation is in Alberta, the security is in Alberta, and the direction is in Alberta, commercial loans can be made to a person from Alberta, B.C., Nova Scotia, or anywhere else in Canada.

The Business Corporations Act will be amended to broaden the existing appeal provisions available for an Alberta company registering in B.C. It will include a cancellation of an extraprovincial incorporation in B.C. pursuant to the new TILMA business registration process.

A change to the Government Organization Act will empower the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations to temporarily amend noncompliant legislation. This will occur when prompt change is required to implement a TILMA panel ruling or for Alberta to avoid a challenge from B.C. under the TILMA when the Legislature is not in session. Some examples of where temporary regulations can be made to deal with unforeseen circumstances or regulatory deficiency already exist in Alberta legislation, including the Municipal Government Act and the Animal Health Act.

We expect that we will continue to make changes under the existing legislative process. However, there may be a situation where others that have authority to make regulations are unwilling or unable to bring their regulations into effect on a timely basis. This could have serious repercussions for Alberta under its TILMA obligations, so these provisions will be short term and would expire after three years. This is something that would only be used in extraordinary circumstances to bring Alberta into alignment with its TILMA obligations.

The Insurance Act will be amended to eliminate barriers facing a small subset of fraternal insurance companies from B.C. when they seek to operate in Alberta.

The Legal Profession Act will be updated to remove the current requirement that as a condition of recognition an individual be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada. Similar requirements in B.C. were struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada, so this amendment will bring Alberta's act into conformity

with the Supreme Court ruling and increase compatibility with B.C. legislation.

Both the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act and the Residential Tenancies Act will be amended, and the requirement to have an address in Alberta will be removed.

Finally, the Business Corporations Act, the Cooperatives Act, and the Partnership Act will each be amended in the same way to remove a current limitation on the ability to modify policies and other measures to conform to the TILMA.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this omnibus bill represents the final series of technical amendments to improve our trading relationship with British Columbia. Once fully implemented, TILMA will mean seamless access for business and workers in both provinces through a larger range of opportunities within a single economic region. It will create Canada's second-largest market, with more than 7.7 million people and a combined GDP of more than \$400 billion. In just a few short weeks more than 120 regulated occupations, including virtually all trades in Alberta, will have full labour mobility in B.C. Alberta businesses will have a broader pool of skilled professionals and tradespeople to meet their needs without having to worry about a lot of red tape to bring a B.C. person onboard.

Mr. Speaker, breaking down trade, investment, and labour mobility barriers is as important during the current global slowdown as it was before. We need to allow businesses and labour to go where they find the opportunity without artificial, unnecessary constraints imposed by government.

So that is the nature of this bill. It is an important bill. As such, I would encourage all members to consider it favourably when the votes come.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 2

### Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2009

[Adjourned debate February 18: Dr. Taft]

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and address a few brief remarks around second reading of Bill 2, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2009. This is a really important bill for this Assembly but also for citizens. I'm going to keep my remarks brief because I'm more interested in participating in the debate in Committee of the Whole.

As to the principle of the bill that we have in front of us, there are a number of things that I support in the bill. One of those is adding the agencies, boards, and committees, those individuals that are appointed by the government to an agency or a board or a committee or a council, that they would also fall under the auspices of this act, and that all parts of it would then apply to them. So if someone is lobbying somebody on the northern development council, for example, that's going to count.

I think that's important because what we've seen from this government over a long period of time is an increased reliance on what used to be called delegated administrative organizations. That's certainly a preferred method of operation that this government has engaged in, where they set up an arm's-length, or supposedly arm's-length, agency which is to deliver the service. But it is still delivering a government service. It still is attached to government, and ultimately government and the minister are responsible for



it. I think we need to be clear that when you're lobbying one of those organizations or an individual connected to it, you are involved in a lobbying activity.

I also am pleased to see the clarifications around "persons associated with." I'm aware that part of that is flowing from the amendment that I had proposed during the original debate of this act. My concern there was that we had to understand that we were in a new millennium, that we have a number of – I can see this debate is going to be longer today than I anticipated. There are a number of those that seem to be very eager to join in the debate, which would include the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Member for Peace River, who seem to be very keen to get in on the debate. I'll be looking forward to their erudite comments.

The persons associated. My concern is that we understand that it would be, I would argue, more common than not common to have people that are sharing a household or are spouses that are each engaged in their own professional careers, and to say that because one of them is associated – and I'll put that in quotations – with the other, who may be engaged in a lobbying effort, they get captured in that is just not realistic in this day and age. We have to be very careful about how we designate those associations and who we capture under that net. That's why I made the original argument.

In test driving the act, there have been some difficulties that have been encountered around what we ended up with, so we're seeing a section here that is clarifying that particular part, which is good. I'm glad to see it. We're moving ahead on that.

There's been a clarification around the reports so that if there was to be an investigation, the registrar, one, is to prepare a report; two, there was an expansion of what was to be in the report and that, in fact, that report would be submitted to the Ethics Commissioner, who then submits it in care of the Speaker to the Legislative Assembly. Perfectly appropriate.

5:40

I'm also glad to see that the disclosure of personal information section, which was the old section 18, has been eliminated. I think we have to be very careful, when we are collecting, using, or disclosing personal information, that there is consent that is attached to that. So if the disclosure has been removed from the act, fine. If it's turned up in a different place, which is possible – I haven't gone looking for it – I think we need to be careful with that.

I'm pleased to see what has been done with the act. I know my colleagues have brought forward their concerns and some of the things they were pleased to see. I'm looking forward to expanded debate in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) a five-minute question-and-comment period is available for anyone who wishes.

Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to start my comments on Bill 2, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2009, by noting that the act has not been proclaimed. We also understand that the Ethics Commissioner expects to have the lobbyist registry ready to launch in September of this year. It includes a clause for review of the act two years after it is proclaimed.

Now, the NDP has generally been supportive of the bill that created the Lobbyists Act. The former MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Mr. Ray Martin, sat on the special select committee of the Legislature which, in its review of the conflict-of-interest

legislation, recommended that the province establish a lobbyist registry. We criticized the act for including a loophole that allows lobbyists to avoid disclosure of any contact with officials where the contact was initiated by the official being lobbied. A similar loophole existed in the federal legislation from 1995 to 2004.

Mr. Speaker, when the act was being debated in 2007, an amendment was introduced by the Official Opposition, which was passed, which changed the definition of an associate. The original version of the Lobbyists Act introduced by the government stated that an individual could not lobby the government on a particular issue if at the same time they were being paid to provide advice to the government on that issue. Paid advice mainly refers to the government practice of establishing multiple stakeholder advisory bodies, such as the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, which is made up of business, government, and environmentalists. It further stated that nobody associated with a lobbyist, such as a spouse, could provide advice to the government on that issue so that people would have to choose between either being a lobbyist or providing paid advice to the government. They could not do both at the same time if they were married.

Now, the amendment brought forward by the Official Opposition at that time removed the reference to spouses in the definition of an associate. The Liberals argued that the law has to recognize that spouses have independent careers and that, therefore, one spouse should not be penalized by the other spouse's career activities. The Conservatives agreed with that proposition, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP did not agree, and we attempted to have that amendment reconsidered. Our argument was that it's a conflict of interest if someone is lobbying government while at the same time their spouse is providing advice to the government on the same issue. Furthermore, the Conflicts of Interest Act recognizes the common interests of spouses by requiring that spouses file their financial interests with the Ethics Commissioner. We asked the question: why should the Lobbyists Act pretend that such common interests do not exist?

Bill 2 seeks to fix the loophole that the Liberal amendment unintentionally created, while maintaining the amendment's original goal of treating spouses as having separate interests in terms of lobbying and of being paid advisors of the government. Now, it does that in a couple of steps. First, in section 2(b) on page 1 the bill amends the act's interpretation clause by removing the clause "the person's spouse or adult interdependent partner" from the definition of an associated person. It also in sections 4(a) and (b) undoes the Liberal amendment by putting the reference to associated persons back in section 6 of the act. The remainder of the bill fixes parts of the act, just some general administrative and minor changes to language and so on.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the Lobbyists Act is an important piece of legislation that will when proclaimed and in force increase the overall degree of transparency in government. Alberta is considerably behind other jurisdictions in Canada in having no legislation governing the activities of lobbyists, so the implementation of this act should be a high priority.

The government's use of multiple stakeholder bodies to provide advice represents a considerable opportunity for individuals to be in a conflict of interest. We would like to avoid any loopholes which would undermine the purpose of the act. We don't understand why someone should be allowed to lobby the government on a particular issue while their spouse is being paid to advise the government on the same issue. There is a clear conflict of interest here. The Conflicts of Interest Act recognizes that spouses share certain interests, and therefore the financial interest of spouses must be declared. There is no reason why the Lobbyists Act should ignore

these common interests. So we would like to support this with an amendment to include spouses in the definition of associated persons.

Mr. Speaker, proclamation of this act is long overdue. Alberta has lagged significantly behind other jurisdictions in failing to recognize conflicts of interest with individuals lobbying government and the potential to undermine the democratic process in our province by powerful and well-financed special interests, and we think that at least with the proclamation of this act, there will be a degree of transparency. We don't have any illusions about this stopping. We are pretty clear it's going to continue, and powerful special interests will use their considerable resources and influence with this government. We don't expect that will change, but at least we will have a small window in on that activity, so we will strengthen the democratic process in our province, and hopefully that will lead to further reforms down the road.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) five minutes are available for comments and questions.

Hearing none, the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General to close debate?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

**Bill 5  
Marketing of Agricultural Products  
Amendment Act, 2009**

[Adjourned debate February 18: Mr. Chase]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to make amends by calling for the vote, if we may, at this time. I mistakenly adjourned debate, and I have the opportunity to correct, so I would call for the vote at this time, please.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member is going to have to make amends another time because I would like to address this particular bill, the Marketing of Agricultural Products Amendment Act, 2009.

I want to just indicate that we want to raise some of the issues. You know, while the bill is mainly administrative and does not make major changes, I think it's still significant. The biggest change is that the appeal and review process is now moved to regulations, and I think that's unfortunate. We've addressed that repeatedly in this House, and the government continues to do that.

5:50

Section 43.1 is added, which specifies that the Minister may make regulations

- (a) providing for or establishing an appeal tribunal;
- (b) respecting reviews and appeals, including the charging of a fee and the recovery of costs.

By condensing the definitions of councils, boards, and commissions, they remove details and put more into regulation. This fits in perfectly with the government's move towards more secrecy because

really we don't know what the plan for marketing associations is going to be. There will be no debate on their function because it's all been moved into regulation.

At two points the proposed act takes out the specifics, in describing the roles of commissions and boards and then review and appeals of decisions. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is then allowed to make regulations on the composition and process of negotiation agencies. A group would use an appeal board if they had a problem with the plan that had been approved by the council; for example, if it cost the producer too much money.

In the current act a council member who does not need to be a producer cannot sit on an appeal board. This is amended in the new legislation, and a council member can sit on an appeal board. By allowing nonproducers to be members of a council, it means people making the decisions are not necessarily those who are being affected by the outcomes of these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, in 2006 a government discussion paper regarding MAPA stated that the review is necessary because the industry needs to consider moving away from producer-run commodity organization. We believe the opposite. In order to protect family farms, we need to continue to develop producer-run commodity organizations. For example, a producer-owned and -operated packing plant would have provided an alternative to big packers like Cargill. Now, while MAPA does state that you must be a producer to sit on the board, the statement does not eliminate the ability for agribusiness to become members or from setting plan regulations.

Again, Mr. Speaker, big corporations already have an advantage when it comes to producing and finishing, and this allows them a chance to control marketing as well. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity pointed out during a debate on Wednesday, the 18th of February, this bill does not directly mention who is best suited to market the agricultural products. However, we know the Alberta government is very opposed to the Canadian Wheat Board single desk, and while this particular bill may not bring it up, we know that the intention is still there. I think I should mention at this time that in the recent Wheat Board elections in western Canada five of the six directors who were elected favour single desk. These are elected by farmers themselves, and it proves once more how out of touch with real farmers this government is. They can't tell the difference between a family farm and a corporate farm, and that's the bottom line.

No one representing the Wheat Board was on the list of participants during the industry governance review. Perhaps the sponsor could let us know if they were even asked to participate.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta spent over \$1.1 million on the Choice Matters campaign to end the Canadian Wheat Board's single desk system. Clearly, their direction has been rejected by farmers across western Canada.

There are no explicit changes in this legislation that are directly linked to the Alberta livestock and meat strategy, but it's hard to imagine that the government would pass up any mechanism that would allow implementation of this plan, a plan which will ultimately lead to the destruction of Alberta's family farms. Mr. Speaker, we do worry about who is marketing our agricultural products because if the marketing and governance mechanisms are in favour of the corporate farms and allow continued corporate concentration and if they ignore the needs of the smaller farms, then once again the result is the progressive destruction of the family farm.

Mr. Speaker, we need more than just administrative bills to fix the ballooning farm debt. There need to be protections in place for small producers who do not receive the same handouts that are given to big agricultural business. While this bill does not make any major

changes, it is ultimately a part of the government's agriculture plan, and this plan, this vision, does not include a space for family farms. So we are going to oppose this bill on that basis.

Thank you very much.

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour I would like to congratulate members on making considerable progress this afternoon and at this time move to adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m. to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]





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