



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 17

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.

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Let us pray. Grant that we the members of our province's Legislature fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all of our citizens. Let us be guided by these principles in our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly today a great diplomat and a friend, Mr. Tom Huffaker, consul general of the United States of America in Calgary. I was honoured to host a farewell lunch and pay tribute to Mr. Huffaker today. We've been very, very fortunate to have the consul general at his post strengthening Alberta-U.S. relations since the summer of 2006. We're grateful to him for helping to build knowledge and understanding of Alberta as a secure, reliable, environmentally responsible, and growing energy supplier to the United States. He has also helped improve border efficiency through the introduction of the NEXUS program at both the Edmonton and the Calgary airports. I can tell you that Mr. Huffaker's hard work and dedication have been appreciated and have gone a long way to illustrating that Alberta and the United States are more than just neighbours; we're business partners, and we're friends.

It was a pleasure to host Mr. Huffaker and his wife, Claire. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, accompanied by Tim Marriott from protocol. I would ask that they rise and receive the very friendly and traditional warm welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** We'll proceed with school groups. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you a very proud Albertan who lives in my constituency, Pastor Dan Dressler. Pastor Dressler moved to Alberta in the 1940s. He was married in 1947 right here in Edmonton. He spent the better part of the next 50-plus years in various communities in Alberta as a pastor and now resides comfortably in Edmonton-Ellerslie. As you know, Mr. Speaker, nine of those years were spent serving the community of Barrhead. Although he is officially retired, he remains spiritually active in the community. At this time I would like to thank Pastor Dressler for his service to this province and ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

For my second introduction it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a school group from my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. They are joining us today from Meadows Baptist Academy, which I had the privilege of visiting a couple of times to educate about the Legislature and to present scrolls for various

academic and fine arts achievements. I want to thank the parents, teachers, and pastors who came down with the students today: Pastor Kevin Williams, Pastor Aaron Pollock, Kristi Taylor, Darren Esayenko, Deisy Campos, and principal Alex Antoniak. I would like them all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly my guests Madeline Rainey and her 16-year-old son, Connor, who are seated in the public gallery. Madeline and Connor presented a petition to the Edmonton public school board on January 13, 2009, seeking more immediate benefits for the district's special-needs students. Madeline is pleased to participate in the board's Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta consultations. I would now ask both Madeline and Connor to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Secondly, I have a group of wonderful, bright students from St. Nicholas Catholic junior high school. There are 50 grade 9 students, Mr. Speaker, as well as their teacher and assistant principal, Norma Jani, teacher Severina Rossi, student teacher Kristen Mackie, and teachers assistants Lois Witteveen and Fresia Pilquill. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 18 visitors from the Public Affairs Bureau. They are seated in both galleries, and I'm very proud of the work that they're doing for the government of Alberta and all Albertans. They are Miss Chelsea Gowing, Ms Stephanie Brown, Mr. Jac MacDonald, Ms Dawn Astbury, Ms Ellen Rowsell, Ms Jacqueline Gibson, Mrs. Tawnya Crerar, Mr. Steven Hodges, Ms Nikki Booth, Mr. Derek Cummings, Ms Meagan Badger, Mrs. Pam Sharpe, Mrs. Josephine Lamy, Mr. Clayton Filkohazy, Ms Julia Smail, Ms Amanda Costanza, Ms Carolyn Gregson, Mr. Paul Marck, and Ms Brenda Fiske. Sorry if I didn't pronounce all of the names properly, but I do want this Assembly to welcome our guests.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. First, it's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly members of the Alberta College and Technical Institute Student Executive Council, or ACTISEC. This organization represents 120,000 postsecondary education students in our province. They're an excellent partner and stakeholder of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology.

This week eight students from across the province have been meeting fellow MLAs and department officials. They're seated in the members' gallery. I want to commend them for the good work they do. I would like to ask each to stand as I call their name and receive the warm welcome. First, Matt Koczur, the chair of ACTISEC; Maigan van der Giessen, president of the Students' Association of MacEwan; Heather MacBeath, vice-president academics of SAIT; Rory Tarant, president of the Grande Prairie

Regional College Students' Association; Geoff Tate, vice-president external and apprenticeship, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology; Stephen Griffith, director of policy of ACTISEC; Lisi Monro, vice-chair of ACTISEC; and Adam Boechler, executive director of ACTISEC. Mr. Speaker, these students do a yeoman's work for the students across our province. I would ask that the Assembly give them a warm welcome in our traditional way.

Mr. Speaker, I do have another introduction. I don't believe my guests are in the House just yet, but I would like to read their names into the *Hansard* and also have members give them a warm welcome. They are eight members from our postsecondary excellence division from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology. They're currently on tour of the building to get a better feel for what happens here. They'll be seated in the gallery shortly. They are Anne Ryton, Kevin Shufflebotham, Bradley Burroughs, Kelly O'Donnell, Meghann Eagle, Roya Damabi, Janet Tully, and Lisa Fox. They will be accompanying us shortly, and I would ask that members recognize their attendance here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is part of Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. I have the privilege of introducing to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly representatives from Alberta's three officially bilingual communities. Francophones have deep roots in Alberta's history, and the francophone community is a vibrant part of the economic, social, and cultural life of Albertans. Francophones have established schools, communities, and cultural centres and other services in more than 35 communities. Of these, three municipalities are officially bilingual: Beaumont, southeast of Edmonton; Legal, north of Edmonton; and Falher, in the Peace Country.

**1:40**

Mr. Speaker, I would ask our guests to stand as I introduce them: the mayors of these municipalities, His Worship Camille Bérubé, the mayor of Beaumont, accompanied by Mr. Marc Landry, the town administrator; His Worship Albert St. Jean, mayor of Legal, accompanied by Mr. Ken Baril, deputy mayor; Mrs. Donna Buchinski, deputy mayor of Falher, accompanied by Mr. Gerard Nicolet, the town administrator.

The town of Falher has provided a pin for each of the members, representing Falher as the honey capital of Canada. The town houses the world's largest honeybee, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the members of this Assembly to give our guests a very warm welcome to our Legislature.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a few young friends of mine from Edmonton-Meadowlark. Their names are Ms Agnes Primrose, Mrs. Marjory Young, Mrs. Alice Fraser, Mrs. Bertha Goldberg, Ms Phyllis Johnson, and Ms Ethel Ward. They're accompanied by their group leaders, Ms Christine Okrusko, Miss Kristen Fulton, and Mr. Ted Mortimer. The Waterford of Summerlea retirement home specializes in excellent independent and assisted living services while providing an active and healthy environment. Andrew Carnegie said: "As I grow older, I pay less attention to what [people] say. I just watch what they do." That's why my guests are here today to view our House proceedings before touring the beautiful Leg. Building. I hope they're pleased with what they see. I look forward to joining them at 2 o'clock for

a picture. They are seated in the members' gallery above, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly five veterans of the 418 City of Edmonton Squadron. Established in 1942 as an Intruder squadron, 418 became the highest scoring Mosquito squadron by the end of the Second World War, scoring being a polite way to say that they shot down more enemy fighters than any other RCAF squadron. Today, March 18, is the 65th anniversary of the squadron. I would like to recognize the veterans here today seated in the public gallery: Mr. Jim Gillespie, Mr. Art Maskell, Mr. Terry Champion, Mr. Bernie Sheppard, and Mr. Monte Stout. I will be discussing the 418 Squadron more in depth later this afternoon in a member's statement. I would ask all five men to rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if my guests are here now or not, but I'd like to introduce them to you and through you to this Assembly. It's a very bright group of political science students from The King's University College who are visiting the Legislature today. They are learning about political systems and are eager to observe government in action. Later this afternoon I will have the honour of meeting with them and sharing with them my experience as an MLA. They are accompanied by their professor, Dr. John Hiemstra. They would be seated in both galleries, and I would like that they would rise if they're here and get the traditional warm reception of this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a friend and constituent of mine, Billy Franklin. Billy lives in Brooks and among other business interests runs a very successful outfitting business called Silver Sage Outfitters. He's accompanied today by a fellow outfitter, Gord Burton. They're in Edmonton, drove up today to attend a meeting in the building later this afternoon. They're seated up in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

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

### Calgary-Montrose Scholarship Recipients

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fostering a culture of innovation in our province requires us to support our young people so that they are the brightest, most innovative young minds in the world. I am proud to say that many young minds reside in my wonderful constituency. I am proud that 197 of my constituents have received the Alexander Rutherford scholarship for high school achievement, the Louise McKinney postsecondary scholarship, or the Jason Lang scholarship. That is a remarkable \$286,000 in scholarship dollars distributed in Calgary-Montrose alone. They are some of the 41,000 students in the province that will receive \$77 million in government scholarships this year. These are investments in the future of students that have worked hard to succeed.

I continually advocate the importance of education, and I'm pleased to see my constituents recognized for their academic achievements. My constituents never fail to fill me with pride, and these students are certainly an example of this. I hope I am able to encourage more young students to pursue postsecondary education, and I wish the recipients and all other students in my constituency success in their postsecondary studies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

#### **Crossroads Business Association**

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize and support some innovative work being done by the Crossroads Community Association. The Crossroads Community Association is situated just east of the Deerfoot in northeast Calgary and is at the very eastern part of my constituency. It is comprised of the communities of Vista Heights, Mayland Heights, and Belfast. I share this community with my hon. colleague from Calgary-East, who represents the Mayland Heights portion.

Mr. Speaker, this is a relatively small community, but what most people don't realize is that this community encompasses a large number of local businesses. As a result the Crossroads Community Association has endeavoured to form a business association for its community. On February 25 I attended the inaugural meeting of the Crossroads Business Association, and I was very impressed with the turnout for the first meeting. The community association leaders who are organizing this endeavour – president Tony Wooster, membership director Jamie Johnson, and Larry Leach – need to be commended for recognizing the important link business and entrepreneurship have to the health and vibrancy of communities.

At a time when businesses are facing extraordinary challenges, becoming an active and involved partner in the community will enhance productivity and competitiveness. Additionally, the Crossroads Business Association will be able to be used as a vehicle to identify important issues in the community that impact business operations and competitiveness as well as to develop collaborative strategies to address these issues.

Mr. Speaker, quite often, even in this House, businesses are criticized and maligned for being profit driven above all else. If there is one thing that most business owners and operators know, it is that a successful business has close ties to its local community and vice versa. I see business and industry as an agent of change with strong community values, and I'm glad that the Crossroads Community Association does as well. I am looking forward to seeing how this association grows over the years as it has the potential to develop and cultivate innovative and collaborative solutions in the Crossroads community.

Thank you.

#### **Statement by the Speaker**

##### **Tabling Documents**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on several occasions the chair has risen in this House to discuss the issue of tablings. On Thursday, March 12, 2009, an hon. member tabled a document on behalf of one of his hon. colleagues, and this document has been brought to the chair's attention for several reasons. The issues are as follows. It is not clear what the document is about. There's no cover page, no title, and no heading. The document is not dated nor signed, nor is there an author identified. While the document appears to be an excerpt from a document that is part of legal proceedings, there is no indication of what the document is an excerpt from.

Hon. members, it is important to note that all documents tabled in the House become official records of the Assembly. They are available to the public through the Legislature Library. The description of sessional papers in the Votes and Proceedings is an actual description of the document and is not based on the comments of the member tabling the document. If there is no way of identifying the document, it is difficult for those producing the official records of the Assembly to be accurate in their description of the document. Staff should not be expected to waste time trying to decipher these documents.

*1:50*

There is a need to set additional guidelines, and the chair would ask all hon. members to follow them. One, copies should be of good quality and legible: five copies collated, stapled, or clipped together. Two, letters should be signed, and the name of the sender should be legible. Three, website articles should clearly indicate the name of the website so that we can properly quote from that website. Four, responses to written questions and motions for returns must indicate that they are such. Please do not table only a set of documents. It should be clear to all of us that the documents are provided as responses. Five, reports, charts, and similar items must have a title or heading on the document. Six, the general rule is that members should table documents under Tabling Returns and Reports.

The chair will be advised when tablings do not meet these guidelines, and those purported tablings will be returned to members and forever be forgotten by this Assembly.

#### **Oral Question Period**

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

##### **Achievement Bonuses**

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has in the past three years given out over \$110 million in achievement bonuses to selected senior officials. The vast majority of civil servants don't even qualify for this pool of money. To the Premier: why is a select group of senior staff getting tens of millions of dollars of bonuses from this government?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the achievement bonus system is put in place to reward achievement. That means bringing budgets into line and helping government deliver the programs that it wants to be delivered. The number of people that participate in the bonus are those that we would call out of scope. These would be people working for the public sector who are no longer a member of a union. The number of people eligible for achievement bonuses is 6,100. The average bonus for the year prior was about \$5,300 each.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this government hands out these millions to very generously paid government officials, Alberta's seniors are told by the same government to pay for basic drug costs. Why is the Premier asking seniors to sacrifice when he's not asking the same of richly paid senior government officials?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the hon. leader is referring to this fiscal year that's ending here in a couple of weeks. We made a commitment as a government that we will honour the remuneration obligations that this government has made to this fiscal year-end, which is March 31. Starting April 1, there is a new

budget. There will be changes. As I said earlier, we'll monitor the revenue stream very carefully, but we may be coming and asking both out of scope and in scope and even members here at the Legislative Assembly to contribute equally to balancing the budget.

**Dr. Swann:** Again to the Premier: will the Premier today commit to suspending this bonus pool?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, for next year the bonus pool is suspended. I will say that the reason that we had the achievement bonus in place is that I believe it dates back to 1999, when our public sector, especially the management ranks, were much lower paid than other equal positions in other provinces. So we asked a private-sector committee to review how we could look at a bonus system and narrow the margin. We did incorporate many years ago the suggestions and, actually, recommendations of the committee.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Deputy ministers, the most senior government officials, have particularly high pay levels. Cabinet, a political body, signs off on the bonuses of this group. Again to the Premier: does the Premier not see that a political body signing off on the bonuses of senior staff jeopardizes the independence of the civil service?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I'm not quite sure where the member is coming from, but it doesn't really matter if the recommendations come from a private-sector committee or from negotiations. At the end of the day cabinet signs off on all salary-negotiated supplements. It is the responsibility of government.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the bonuses themselves are more than the average Albertan makes in a year. To the Premier: how are these bonuses determined?

**Mr. Stelmach:** They're determined on achievement. To give an example, this year, as our revenue was dropping dramatically towards the latter part of the year, I instructed my deputy to meet with the deputies and other management to ensure that we do balance the budget this year, and the budget will be balanced. For next year we will be, as I said before, suspending, and we will be looking at other public-sector salaries. But, like I said, we're going to do it very fairly. We're going to meet with them. We're going to gauge our revenue stream and our expenses, and we may have to approach everyone to contribute to balancing the budget.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last July cabinet approved significant pay increases for this April to deputy ministers to a basic rate of \$265,000 per year. That's before bonuses. This salary was set in the midst of a boom, when the government was expecting huge surpluses. Now we're facing a deficit. Again to the Premier: will these pay hikes be continuing?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, I can tell you that for the next year there won't be any pay hikes, not for elected officials and not for any of the senior officials. But, again, there's the discussion: then what do we do with other public-sector people? I've said that we want to keep our nurses, doctors, teachers working. We do have an agreement with teachers, and we're going to live up to that agreement. It's

based on average weekly earnings. We just signed it last year, so we're committed to that. We'll hold discussions with union leaders, if necessary, to see how we can bring our budget into line. Can we balance the budget based on the backs of the public sector for next year? No, we can't. It's impossible because the revenue drop is substantial. But we'll look over the next couple of years. If the economy does recover, then we won't have to go through the pain, but if it doesn't, we will have to sit down and have discussions with our public sector.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Transparency was one of the Premier's priorities when he signed off on the 2007-08 annual report of Executive Council. My first question is for the Premier. Why in this report did the Premier fail to disclose the bonuses paid to senior officials within the Ministry of Executive Council?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, I would ask the chair of the Public Accounts Committee as to how that was missed. You know, it's obvious that today he recognized it, but when it did occur, he didn't notice it. But we did immediately post on the website a little, tiny omission. It's a little line in terms of the accumulated bonuses for the year. But the bonuses are not something that just came up this past fiscal year. The bonuses have been in place since I believe 1999, when, again, the private-sector committee came forward and gave recommendations to government to close the gap.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Given that the former Premier, Mr. Klein, as President of Executive Council always made sure that there was full disclosure of the bonuses, I expect better from the Premier next year.

Now, again, given that the Deputy Minister of Executive Council calls the shots on the annual achievement bonus fund allotment, what is set aside now for the fiscal year that's going to end March 31 for achievement bonuses? Is it \$40 million? Is it \$45 million? What is the amount?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, there is a pool set aside for achievement bonuses. One incorrect statement. What happens is the Deputy Minister of Executive Council does meet with the deputies. There is a pool for deputies, and then there is a separate pool for other management staff. He also meets with ministers. But we also consult with the committee to ensure that the bonus that we have, the pool that we have set aside, is consistent with their recommendations. The deputy minister will decide in consultation with ministers to see if the objectives of the business plan were met.

2:00

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Taxpayers of this province have the right to know. Again to the Premier: what amount has been set aside by cabinet for achievement bonuses for the fiscal year that's going to end on March 31? Is it \$40 million? Is it \$45 million? Why won't you tell us?

**Mr. Stelmach:** The problem in informing the House – he's part of the Public Accounts Committee; he should know that. The pool for this year, for '08-09 . . . [interjection] I'm sorry. He asked the question, and I guess he doesn't want to hear the answer.

The pool for this year, for '08-09 – the budget year '08-09 is ending on March 31, which is in a couple of weeks – is \$40 million and, again, shared by 6,100 people.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government tells hardworking Albertans to tighten their belts, but it's handing out \$40 million in bonuses to bureaucrats this year. [interjection] It deserves more than one question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood does have the floor.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I'll get an answer. Witness the outrage of U.S. politicians about unjustified bonuses paid to AIG executives and contrast it with this government's justification of handouts to their top bureaucrats. When will the government show some respect to hard-pressed taxpayers and cancel these extravagant bonuses?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, it looks like the leader of the opposition knew of the pool, and the chair of Public Accounts didn't, but that wasn't part of this question.

As I said before, for next year, in keeping with the belt-tightening, the bonuses will be suspended, number one. Number two, we will look at other settlements. We want to be fair. We don't want to do something overnight, and that's why we're committed for all public-sector staff to keep our commitments to March 31 of '09. As we proceed, it may be a different story. I don't know what that'll be as we'll have to watch the revenue and expenditure sides very carefully.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Most provincial employees don't get big fat bonuses.

More than 300 lumber workers were fired last month at the Tolko, Millar Western, and Weyerhaeuser plants. Meanwhile, Sustainable Resource bureaucrats made \$2 million in bonuses. To the Premier: how can you look in the eyes of Albertans who've just lost their jobs when you're handing over these extravagant bonuses to top bureaucrats?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, there is one omission on behalf of the member. Most public-sector employees are covered by union agreements, and we're not breaking them. This is another commitment we made, not a union agreement but a commitment we made to Albertans. They work for the public sector. They're not in a union; they're out of unions. There are approximately, as I said, 6,100 people that share in the bonus package.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, ConocoPhillips and other oil and gas companies let 200 people go just last month. In the meantime, Energy bureaucrats are making \$1.5 million in bonuses. Again to the Premier: how can you look in the eyes of these Albertans who have just lost their jobs and tell them that you've forked over 1 and a half million dollars in bonuses to Energy bureaucrats?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we're suspending the bonuses for next year.

You know, looking in the eyes? Have that member look in the eyes of all the people that lost their job and still stand in this House and tell me why he wants \$330,000 more for office expenditures for two members – \$330,000 more. We treated that party very fairly because this Assembly – this Assembly – the committee, gave him expenditures for four members, not to reflect the two members he has now but for four members, plus he wants even more money.

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

### Provincial Economic Strategy

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economic situation has been significantly affected by the current downturn, particularly as it relates to low energy prices. As a result, we know that government revenues this year will be significantly lower than they were last year. Can the Minister of Finance and Enterprise assure Albertans that the government will do all it can to keep Albertans working?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we're aware that our infrastructure expenditure in Alberta is two to three times what it is anywhere else. For every billion dollars that we spend in infrastructure, it supports 11,600 jobs. We have identified that the infrastructure spending is part of our four-point platform this year that will help us retain jobs and keep Albertans working.

**Mr. Quest:** Mr. Speaker, my first supplementary to the same minister. That's well and good, but we see other governments raising taxes to pay for new infrastructure. Can the minister assure Albertans that they won't lose their tax advantage as a result of this massive investment in public infrastructure?

**Ms Evans:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we intend to keep the lowest public taxes of any regime in Canada. Just today New Brunswick, for example, announced that they were going to make moves on taxation, still with their intent to 2012. It is not as much advantage as Albertans have. Albertans pay between \$3,000 and \$5,000 less than any other Canadian in taxes, and this year they got the added advantage of \$1 billion returned to their pockets from the health premiums.

**Mr. Quest:** Mr. Speaker, if we're in such a good position, why would we consider borrowing to pay for this infrastructure if we have the money available?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we're looking at borrowing as another way to lever from our triple-A credit rating to look at smart expenditures for capital, to look at ways of investing in Albertans. Today the Young Presidents' Organization talked about this being an ideal time to use our leverage as a triple-A credit rating to find projects that would be worthy of borrowing, with payback not only to Albertans in infrastructure but, particularly on the short-term borrowing that we have been looking at, to take advantage of opportunities to build Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Water Management

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public needs to trust the government to protect our most precious natural resource, water. However, the Balzac fiasco has brought one thing into the light: that trust was violated. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. The 2006-07 supplementary estimates allocated \$8.3 million to support waste-water elements for the entire Balzac project. They specifically mentioned the horse-racing track and the equine centre. Now that only the mall is being built, where is the money?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the allocation of funding to various water and waste-water projects throughout this province is not dependent upon what develops in the area but, rather, on the participation of the municipality. So the project is facilitated through a cost-sharing agreement with the municipality, and the development that comes forward is at various paces. I'm sure that this particular development will be fully built over a reasonable period of time.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. My next question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Given that this money for a horse track and an equine centre came from a program restricted to a confirmed agricultural processing investment, meaning food and beverage processing, and there is no longer any connection to this at all – there's only a mall left – why have Albertans paid for water treatment for a privately owned mall?

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the agriculture component of this doesn't relate at all to what the hon. member is talking about. It was the transfer of water to Balzac, which met the criteria at that particular time from the municipality.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again to the Minister of Environment. Giving a water allocation to a horse-racing track and a megamall through a completely unrelated agricultural food processing program is subverting sound water management principles and betraying the public trust. To the minister: how can Albertans trust that you will make proper decisions about our water, based on this past history?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I made a commitment at the beginning of this session that I would not allow myself to be baited by inflammatory preambles, and I hold firm to that, but this member is coming very, very close.

The fact of the matter is that the water allocation is to the municipality. The municipality of Rocky View is the one that holds the licence. It has nothing whatsoever to do with racetracks or malls. She should ask the municipality of Rocky View what they intend to do with the water that they have on their licence.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

2:10

### Farm Equipment Hauling

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I received numerous calls and complaints from some of the farmers in my constituency regarding a new farm equipment policy. In fact, in today's local

paper there was an editorial that it must be pick on farmer week. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Is the minister seriously considering bringing in regulations that will increase the cost farmers have to pay to operate their own equipment?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Our government knows how important farmers are to this province and how challenging it is for them to operate today. We're actually doing everything we can to help farmers to make sure that they're able to transport their equipment safely and efficiently on our highways, but at the same time we have to make sure that all Albertans and the travelling public are safe. That's why we have always had safety standards on hauling farm equipment from one piece of property to another.

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. I'm being told that the farmers are now being required to have a permit to operate their equipment. Some farmers have a dozen pieces of equipment on their land. Do you honestly expect them to get a permit for each piece of equipment?

**Mr. Ouellette:** No, Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not expect them to have to do that. We have made it very easy for farmers. They're only ever going to have to go out and get one permit. They're just going to have to have a permit that shows that they're a farmer, and they're not going to have to list all that equipment. We just want to make sure that they do it safely. All they're going to have to do is make one phone call. There's no charge for the permit, but we do require that large equipment is properly marked and that other drivers use the road safely.

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the same minister. Is it true that as we speak, your law enforcement officers are out ticketing farmers who don't obey these new rules?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, one thing is for sure: my department is not trying to make life difficult for farmers. In fact, I haven't heard of one ticket being handed out to a farmer for moving farm equipment. But I've got to tell you something. There are people out there trying to masquerade as farmers, and they're doing commercial operations. We can't have that. [interjections] It is not fair to other commercial operators. We can't have commercial equipment running with purple fuel and on farm plates. Commercial operators will be ticketed. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** And we have passed the full-moon phase.

### Achievement Bonuses

*(continued)*

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not the only witness to the daylight robbery being perpetrated by Alberta Justice on Alberta taxpayers. This government claims to represent all our interests. Obviously, you need a reminder that Robin Hood gave the loot to the poor, not to appointed senior civil servants. Those same people who decided that it wasn't in the public interest to prosecute 19 electoral violations are likely getting a \$5.8 million windfall. My question is for the Minister of Justice. Can she explain exactly what types of department savings merited such largesse in bonus payouts?



**Ms Redford:** I'd like the hon. member to repeat the last part of his question. I want to make sure I understood exactly what he said, please, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** That counts as a question and an answer. We'll go on to the second question.

**Mr. Hehr:** Okay. Mr. Speaker, Biggie Smalls would rap about this heist if he were still with us. To the Minister of Justice again: what input do you have around the cabinet table into how this \$5.8 million is disbursed and to whom these bonuses are paid?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't get all of the first question, but I got enough of it to know that the hon. member is treating something which I take very seriously in a humorous way. I have said in this House over and over again that the prosecutors in the Department of Justice prosecute in the public interest. I believe that, this government believes that, I believe that the people of Alberta believe that, and I do not believe that it is appropriate to make political hay with something that is so serious.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much for that response, but I'd still like an answer to my second question. As the Minister of Justice how do you decide who gets the bonus payments, and on what is this based?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question. Our prosecutors have integrity. Our prosecutors, as far as I understand my job, are compensated according to an agreement that allows them to be compensated sufficiently for the important and independent work that they do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Provincial Economic Strategy

*(continued)*

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are in the midst of a global economic recession, and Alberta is being affected along with most other jurisdictions around the world. My question to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise: during these difficult times what is the government's plan for preserving prosperity and quality of life for Albertans?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, again I reference our four-point plan. The first part of the plan is to reduce our spending. I think you've heard our Premier relate to that, that we're going to tighten our belts. We're going to make sure that infrastructure, health care, education are priorities for Albertans, that we provide those services as much as possible. That emphasis will be reflected in this budget. Again, with the comments that I made previously about infrastructure, keeping Alberta moving, keeping Alberta's goods going to market will be a good part of our expenditure targets this year.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: that takes care of the present, but what about the future?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, it's been very interesting today to hear somebody talk to us about the alphabet to determine whether Alberta

is going to go into a deep V and come right back up or whether we're going to go down and spend a little while in the bottom of the trough. I believe Alberta's record is that when we hit a recession period, as we have, we look very carefully at what pays our way, and that's the commodity prices, essentially oil and gas. Regardless of what industry you are in, oil and gas is what has distinguished Alberta and given us a superior track record on revenues. It's not affordable to imagine that people are going to get away with paying less for those commodities in the future. Fossil fuels are here to stay. I expect our deep V will change very soon, and as we come out of this recession, Albertans will see once again a very buoyant economy.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister, my last question: is there any indication how long this downturn or this recession might last?

**Ms Evans:** Frankly, no, Mr. Speaker. We'd all like to think that it would be a shorter period. Many of the financial agencies predict that Alberta will be better off. The International Monetary Fund predicts that it'll be a recovery period through 2010 for Alberta.

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

### Seniors' Pharmaceutical Plan

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday there was a meeting of seniors who are members of CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and they expressed their outrage that the minister of health is proposing changes to their pharmaceutical coverage. Today they'll be even more outraged to learn that Health and Wellness is paying their senior management \$1.8 million in bonuses. To the Minister of Health and Wellness. This plan creates have and have-not seniors. Canada's health care is based on the principle of universality. Can the minister explain how this plan upholds that very cherished and envied principle?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that kind of question just exactly shows you how uninformed that particular group is. They know full well that drug prescriptions have nothing to do with the Canada Health Act, have nothing to do with universality. It just absolutely amazes me here in this House that we have this group over here: one day they're attacking paramedics and their ability to perform their role, the next day they're attacking our civil servants, the next day they're attacking our prosecutors, and then they wonder why nobody elects them in four years when they've attacked every group in the province.

**Ms Pastoor:** The theatrics are getting better.

Will the minister admit that any change to seniors' pharmaceutical costs that creates a deductible based on income is just another form of taxation on the people that have the greatest need for those medications?

2:20

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I've said on many occasions that what we are attempting to do in health care is to make this system sustainable into the future so that when all of us are in the age category where we have to rely on a government benefit supplemental program, it's going to be there for us. We have introduced a new

model that we propose to move forward with in 2010. Now, I have said that the world has changed since we brought that forward, and we are taking a second look at whether all of the numbers in the model are still correct. We've heard seniors. When we finish that assessment, we will bring back to this Assembly what we believe is the appropriate program in this environment.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you for that. I do realize you have said that you would look at it, which is sort of going into my third question. If you would commit to a full review of the whole program, when could we expect a timeline where this would be reported back to the House?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike members of the opposition, who just sort of fly off and say things and do things and don't seem to have a co-ordinated effort, when the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who chairs Public Accounts, doesn't inform his leader as to what he knows and what he doesn't know and back and forth, we do things in a way that we work it through the process. That's exactly what we're doing, and we will have something for this particular House to consider this year.

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

#### Nuclear Power

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bruce Power has launched an advertising campaign in support of their bid to bring nuclear reactors and radioactive waste with a shelf life of thousands of years to Alberta. The Minister of Energy commissioned a report from a nuclear panel almost a year ago, and our documents show that that panel was dissolved in December. To the minister: why are you sitting on the public release of this report if not because nuclear power in Alberta is a ridiculous waste of taxpayers' dollars?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, all Albertans are entitled to their opinion. However, relative to the report I think that it's an extremely valuable document for Albertans. We are going through it and assessing the information therein, and in due course we will deal with it publicly.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's a year late at this point.

A nuclear plant creates 2,000 tonnes of radioactive waste per year that nobody can clean up. We've already got an environmental disaster on our hands in the form of tailings ponds that nobody can clean up. Now this government wants to repeat that mistake, this time with an undisposable pool of radioactive waste that nobody can clean up. To the minister: why are you sitting on your panel's report if not because you know it's a recipe for yet another environmental disaster?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, you know, it really is unfortunate that individuals cannot get beyond 1950s and '40s and '30s technology. The nuclear industry that works globally today, as a matter of fact one of the sources of electrical energy that is the most benign relative to greenhouse gas emissions, is a much, much different group of facilities than were in place at the times when we've had rather major accidents, nothing similar to what's happening.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, 1950, 2050, there is no answer for disposing of nuclear waste. Hate to break it to you, but there's nothing.

Now, the experts also agree on one other thing, that nuclear power leaves taxpayers on the hook for billions and billions of dollars. Meanwhile the 30,000 Albertans losing their jobs so far this year believe that that money can be spent on sustainable job creation, not a boondoggle. When will you stop hiding your nuclear report and acknowledge the truth, that nuclear power is expensive, too dangerous, and too short sighted to play a role in our economic future?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that in the province of Alberta now – and in the province of Alberta as we see it going forward – the taxpayers of Alberta are not on the hook for any of the generation that we consume in the province now. We don't see that the taxpayers of Alberta will be in any different position whatever type of alternate and new energy sources are brought to play in the province of Alberta.

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

#### Country of Origin Labelling

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For some time our agricultural industry has been concerned about the potential impact of mandatory country of origin labelling being introduced in the United States. Monday, March 16, was the day that COOL, as it is called, came into effect, and as I understand it, we have yet to resolve this important trade issue. To the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: could the minister provide some detail on the status of this regulation, which essentially segregates Canadian product and imposes extra costs?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Yes, I can, Mr. Speaker. In January the USDA introduced some flexibility into COOL, addressing some of our concerns on the labelling requirements for Canadian beef products, but the USDA is now requesting that the industry voluntarily implement stricter labelling, effectively reducing flexibility. The Canadian industry will be faced with extra costs in order to adhere to these labelling requirements. In addition, as the U.S. looks to buy more domestic products, COOL certainly has the ability to push our products out of their market.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you. To the same minister. My ag constituents meet with me often, and they want to know what action is being taken to address this ongoing issue because, in their words, they don't think it's cool.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Although the Canadian government has jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, over these trading matters, Alberta continues to raise the issue with our U.S. trade partners and our federal counterparts in Ottawa. ALMA, or the Livestock and Meat Agency, is also addressing the issue through incremental market access. ALMA played a key role in bringing many organizations who had similar concerns and views to the table to ensure a single industry voice on the issue. This resulted in a unified position within Alberta and Canada on incremental market access and stronger advocating on the national level. We've already seen the results of some of that with the incremental market access into Hong Kong.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you. Finally, to the same minister: what else can this government or Alberta's beef industry do to remain competitive when faced with such a trade barrier as COOL?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have two options, as I see it, for addressing this issue. We can hope that COOL does not proceed in its current form, and then we return to the status quo, and any cattleman will tell you that the status quo has not been very profitable. Or we can take charge of our own future and focus on accessing markets that will be profitable for our producers. The Alberta livestock and meat strategy does just this. It is positioning our industry as a desirable trade partner in Canadian international markets such as Korea, China, and Japan as well.

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

#### Achievement Bonuses

*(continued)*

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year Service Alberta handed out \$3.9 million in achievement bonuses to its senior staff. That is the second-highest amount paid out by all ministries, beaten only by the Department of Justice. To the Minister of Service Alberta: how does the minister justify \$3.9 million in bonuses?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really important to bring some clarity to this issue. Just to make it very clear, Service Alberta's bonuses were \$2.7 million. The other portions were when Service Alberta was with the former ministry, under the ministry of the Treasury Board, where air transportation, regulatory review, and corporate human resources were.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What are the criteria used to give out these bonuses?

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to these bonuses this policy is handled through corporate human resources and is based on achievement, as was mentioned previously, and based on the hard work of the civil service. I think it's really important to validate the hard work that these civil servants do to support all of us in the work that we're doing for Albertans.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Who gives the final sign-off on these achievement bonuses for senior staff members?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the Premier answered that question very well. I will add that with respect to this whole area, again, it's validating the hard work that civil servants do for Albertans and making sure that their interests are protected and that they are accountable as well.

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

2:30

#### Gang-related Crime

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Gangs and gang violence seem to be taking root in communities right across Alberta. My questions are to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. How is the minister addressing these very serious concerns about crime and safety?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the work that we've done through crime and safe communities, the Solicitor General and I have worked in partnership with police commissions across this province to talk about the issues that they are facing. Apart from the work that we've already done in introducing Bill 50, which has gone a long way to help police officers do their job better and to disrupt crime, I had the opportunity to speak last night to the Calgary Police Commission, where it was very clear that there is a very strong synergy between the work that the provincial government is doing around education, prevention, awareness as well as enforcement and prosecution and the work that police services across this province are doing.

Mr. Speaker, we will also be hosting in June a summit on gang activity, that the Premier will be chairing, and at that summit we are going to be able to look at what we have all been doing up until now with respect to gangs and what the long-term strategy should be.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The next question to the same minister. The lure of the gang lifestyle can be very attractive for some young people. What is being done to reduce recruitment into gangs?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important part of what we have to talk about for safe communities. It's very clear that all of the work that is done through Health and Wellness, Children and Youth Services, Education, Culture and Community Spirit, and the work that policing agencies are doing across this province has to speak to young people about the risks of criminal activity and a gang lifestyle.

It's very clear, Mr. Speaker, that we also have to make sure that we're addressing the root causes of crime, that we're dealing with vulnerable people who may very well end up in situations where they develop addictions that could lead to lives of crime. We're going to stop that.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: what is being done long term to curb the rise of organized crime in this province?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said in this House before and as we as a government have said in the past year, we believe that the entire long-term gang prevention strategy and crime prevention strategy in this province must deal with a number of pillars. We have to deal with awareness, education. We have to help vulnerable people, and we have to effectively enforce the laws

and prosecute people that are committing crimes. This summit will allow us to develop that full long-term strategy in partnership with people in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

#### Rural School Bus Travel Time

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural schools close because school boards face the impossible job of funding schools with insufficient resources. Increased busing costs coupled with decreased funding, a backlog of aging infrastructure, and a loss of teachers have made many schools unsustainable. Rural schools need better funding to sustainably meet these challenges. To the Minister of Education: does the minister acknowledge that requiring some children to spend upwards of three to four hours a day on school buses is unacceptable?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that it was a difficult thing to do when I did it, and it's not the most attractive way to ensure that our children get a good education. In fact, I think most school boards try to keep bus rides to less than an hour one way. But we do have challenges with respect to the provision of education services in rural areas where people choose to live. The wonders of technology, however, and the SuperNet, that the province of Alberta has put in place, are making it a lot easier to make sure that children in all parts of this province have access to a very high-quality public education. That's why people come from all around the world to look at what we're doing.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit to setting limits to the amount of time a child can spend on a school bus each day and work with school boards to help solve their transportation issues, actions that could help stave off the epidemic of rural school closures?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This hon. member would be one of the first to yell and scream if we dissolved all the school boards in the province and made one superboard so that we could run it from here. That's not what we're doing. We have elected school boards across the province. They determine what their local issues are and how best to provide the services in their areas, and I would not substitute my judgment for their judgment of their local communities.

**Mr. Chase:** They say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The only way school boards can collect the money is through what the province provides. Considering that the closure of the Manyberries school as well as numerous grades within the Golden Hills school division will result in students spending an additional hour on the bus each day, will the minister review the rules surrounding rural school closures?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I'll have to take his word for the issue about the road to hell because I've never been on it.

I would have to say, again, that issues of schools in local communities is a very, very important one, a very close issue for people. I grew up in a rural area. I know how important a school is to the

community as a centre of the community. Those aren't decisions that anybody takes lightly when you close schools. Obviously, transportation of children is a very, very important aspect. It requires someone in the local area who has knowledge of the local circumstances to be able to sit down with parents in their communities and make those very tough decisions, and that's what school boards do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

#### TILMA Effects on Municipalities

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In July 2008 officials from Alberta and British Columbia reached an agreement that outlines the municipal obligations under the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, the acronym TILMA. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. How will Alberta's municipalities benefit from the amendments once they come into place on April 1?

#### Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

**The Speaker:** You know, I'm concerned about this question because my understanding is that this bill is in committee and up for review this afternoon. In committee we deal with amendments, so the time to really debate this is at that time, not in the question period.

Does the hon. member have a policy question?

**Mr. Jacobs:** The question also relates to TILMA, Mr. Speaker, so I would withdraw the question.

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

#### Homelessness Initiatives

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, and they are about the province's 10-year plan to end homelessness, which, the minister well knows, I am delighted to finally see. It's been a long time in development. It's been a long time in negotiation. It's been a long time coming. I think it is a good plan. Of course, as I have said, the devil is in the details and the funding, and we don't know if any funding is there for it yet. So although I'm happy to see that the plan is finally released, I'm wondering why the minister released the plan three weeks before the budget, three weeks before any funding could be committed.

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did make a commitment to release the plan when the processes had been completed. The plan, hon. member, had gone through the process of cabinet policy committees, of caucus, various processes: meetings with municipalities, you know, discussions with the local agencies and community boards. I did make that commitment, and that's why it was released at this time. That process was completed. I am pleased, hon. member, that you support the plan. Thank you for that.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that 40 per cent of homeless people suffer from mental illness, what supports have been committed to by the minister of health that

you're aware of that will specifically address this root cause of homelessness?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Mr. Speaker, those supports for people that do have issues that relate to mental health are through good programs like Pathways to Housing, which, as you know, is a program for people that have gone from emergency shelters to emergency for assistance. A very special mental health support team meets them at emergency and places them into Housing First. We've found that that is working. That's just one of the many good programs offered by the communities as a whole.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: considering that the plan doesn't mention First Nations people even though they comprise something in excess of 30 per cent of the homeless population in this province, how much of the funding – and it seems certainly limited until April 7 and maybe after that; we'll find out on April 7 – will go to programs geared to the aboriginal community?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a very important question. I can tell you that we did not take any group of people based on their culture and identify that particular group in the plan. That does relate to the aboriginal people. That's because every program in this plan is going to assist all Albertans that are homeless, and that does include our aboriginal peoples.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

#### 2:40 **Cataract Surgery Wait Times**

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Contracting out medical services such as cataract surgery to private clinics has been a very efficient and successful innovation of our health system. However, since December my constituency office has been contacted on six separate occasions by constituents expressing frustration with long wait times for cataract surgery. Some of my constituents fear that they will lose their independence as a result of these extended wait times of in some cases up to 18 months. I've been informed that much of the delay is a result of a lack of funding. All of my questions are for the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. What is the government doing to ensure that the wait times for cataract surgery are reduced?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have to be clear what the terminology is for lack of funding. What does take place is that, previously through the regions and now through Alberta Health Services Board, there is an allocation of funding for procedures, whether it's cataracts, whether it's hips and knees. What has occurred in this particular budget year is that the allocation of funding has been exhausted. In the past several health regions have actually gone beyond the level of funding, and that won't be happening this year.

**Dr. Brown:** Can the minister advise how the new Alberta Health Services Board is going to help to resolve this waiting-list problem?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, I guess one way is that they will stick to budget, and that is exactly what they have done. But I think it's important

to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in 2004 some 15,000 cataract surgeries were performed in Alberta. Only 1,500 or so of those were through private facilities. In 2007 that number increased to 21,000 cataract surgeries, with only just under 3,000 in private facilities. We have been attempting to keep up the funding with the increase in demand, but again, like many things in health care, demand is exceeding what we're able to fund.

**Dr. Brown:** Will the minister ensure that cataract surgeries are adequately funded and prioritized for those people who are in danger of losing their independence such as their driver's licence because of the fact that they have cataracts?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a couple of things. First of all, it is not the minister who determines whether a patient requires cataract surgery. It's the ophthalmologist. If an ophthalmologist determines that it's an emergency or urgent, that goes beyond that envelope of funding, and they will be treated on an emergent or urgent basis. Unfortunately, there are others that will be looked after as the funding becomes available in the new budget.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 104 questions and responses. In 30 seconds from now we'll continue the Routine.

#### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

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

#### **2009 Bantam B Female Hockey Provincials**

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, March 13, I attended the opening ceremony of the 2009 bantam B female hockey provincials at the Bonnyville Centennial Centre. This weekend marked the end of a 17-year wait to host the provincial hockey tournament in my hometown of Bonnyville. Hosting this tournament was such a great opportunity to bring together and to cheer on the 150 girls who participated.

Female hockey has been developing in Bonnyville for the past three years and is still very new. The tournament was able to give exposure to this growing sport and also to the local team from my constituency, the Lakeland Jaguars, girls from both Bonnyville and Cold Lake. It is my hope that this exposure will encourage more girls to get involved in hockey at a competitive level.

Hon. members, girls from many of your constituencies competed in this tournament. The 10 teams who participated came from High Prairie, Lloydminster, Spruce Grove, Innisfail, Lethbridge, Cochrane, Viking, Edmonton, Calgary, and, of course, the Lakeland. I would like to congratulate all of the teams, coaches, volunteers, and parents who made this tournament a complete success, especially the Innisfail Flyers, who beat Lethbridge 6 to 4 in the final to take first place in the tournament.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Protection of Children in Care**

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most foster parents do an admirable job of raising the children they selflessly bring into their homes. With the noblest intentions they make sure that some of our most troubled and vulnerable children enjoy a loving, nourishing environment in which to learn and grow.

Unfortunately, as hard as it is to come to grips with this reality,

there are some foster homes in which children have suffered neglect and abuse. Mr. Speaker, consider the case of a disabled child placed in foster care because the natural parents could not afford to meet its needs. The medical care the child needed would have had to be paid out of pocket because at that time the level of care wasn't provided by the government.

Foster care seemed the only solution, which raises an important set of questions. Is this government doing enough to keep families together? Are children put into foster care too soon without giving due respect to the needs of the biological family? What efforts are made to support birth parents within their home prior to making the drastic decision to apprehend their children? Furthermore, the case in question turned into a horror story for this family. How do parents forced to give up their children know with any certainty that the special needs of their child will be met?

Mr. Speaker, when the children are given up or removed from the care of their natural parents, it happens because people are concerned about the welfare and safety of the child. Yet it seems as though once custody changes, the government's duty of supervisory care of the child's safety and welfare is diminished or taken for granted.

The tragic facts reveal that we should not, must not take the child's safety in foster care for granted. As much as we may admire foster parents, some do a better job than others. The government cannot simply hand off children in need to foster parents and consider its job done. These children in care deserve and demand more than that. Regular monitoring of foster care and enforcement of standards is needed to ensure that the safety and well-being of Alberta's most vulnerable children is protected.

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

#### 65th Anniversary of 418 City of Edmonton Squadron

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it is my privilege to rise and highlight another group of people from Edmonton-Calder. Under the command of Edmontonian Russ Bannock 418 Squadron aircraft and crews flew their Mosquito aircraft over the heart of occupied Europe in order to achieve their mission of damaging the Nazi war machine.

To give you some background, the Mosquito was a light bomber, twin-engine 4,000 horsepower wooden airplane. It was equipped with eight 30-calibre machine guns. It was fast and deadly. The 418 was responsible for the interception of the Nazi V-1 flying bombers that rained down over Europe. The V-1 was the first cruise missile, and its job was to kill and terrify civilians. The 418 was key in the defence against this weapon, and the tactic was search and destroy in flight. The squadron was extremely successful in this defence.

After World War II 418 became a resident in the hangar of what is now the Alberta Aviation Museum, and it has continued its service to the country as a reserve squadron, defending both Edmonton and the north during the Cold War. The 418 defended the Arctic Circle north in search and rescue liaison roles, and in 1992 it officially stood down.

The squadron will remain in the Aviation Museum until such time as the country needs the services of this group once more. The 418 City of Edmonton Squadron is truly a proud part of Edmonton's history and future, and I would like to congratulate this historic group and the veterans celebrating here today on their 65th anniversary.

Thank you.

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

#### Eco Village of Hope

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a unique Alberta-initiated international development project, the Eco Village of Hope. The Eco Village of Hope is one of the very few international development initiatives between Alberta and China.

The project founder, Renay Eng-Fisher, a second-generation born-and-raised Albertan, inherited a house in her father's ancestral village when he passed away a few years ago. During her very first trip to China she connected the idea of making constructive use of her ancestral house with the need of the local orphaned children like her father was.

2:50

In the process a group of Albertans of diverse ethnic and professional backgrounds created a comprehensive humanitarian initiative that includes caring for the abandoned children and children with disabilities and building the capacity of their caregivers by providing them with training and sharing ecological development expertise with those who live and work in those communities. Hence, the Eco Village of Hope was born.

Mr. Speaker, in the two years since the formation of the Eco Village of Hope Society over 30 Albertan volunteers have travelled to this region to provide training and support to the project. The society has received requests from officials from a nearby region to assist them with training local volunteers and staff associated with their 600-children orphanage as well as setting up programs for those children, and the Eco Village of Hope Society is in the process of establishing their third orphanage.

Mr. Speaker, the Eco Village of Hope project is a wonderful example of that famous belief in the power of a small group of determined, dedicated people to make transformative changes to people's lives. It's also a great example of the power of human connections, connection between generations, the bond between parent and child, the drive derived from an emotional connection to a totally strange land, and the subsequent treasured connections and goodwill created between those who are so willing to give and those who benefit from their generosity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 27

#### Alberta Research and Innovation Act

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 27, the Alberta Research and Innovation Act, 2009. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Administrator, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The intent of this bill is to enable a more integrated and aligned approach to research and innovation to support continued economic prosperity and a high quality of life in Alberta. Through the development of a new roles and mandates framework for Alberta's provincially funded research and innovation systems it will further strengthen and align the research and innovation system to help researchers and entrepreneurs in realizing their potential as creators of world-class discoveries and products. It will also enhance the focus on the government of Alberta's strategic research and innovation priorities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Bill 28**  
**Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2009**

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 28, the Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2009.

This is an omnibus bill that will provide tools to help the province achieve goals set out in the provincial energy strategy while eliminating inefficiencies found in the current energy legislation. In all, the Energy Statutes Amendment Act will amend 10 and repeal two acts previously passed by the Alberta Legislature. The passage of this act will promote sustainable energy development and increase regulatory efficiencies, including amendments to existing legislation that will facilitate taking bitumen as royalty in kind to optimize benefits of oil sands production for Albertans and expanding the industry-funded orphan well fund, Mr. Speaker, to include large facilities, including large in situ oil sands processing facilities, sulphur recovery gas plants, and stand-alone straddle plants.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 28 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

**Bill 32**  
**Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act**

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully request leave to move first reading of Bill 32, the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act.

This bill provides the legislative framework that will help improve transparency and accountability and promote excellence in governance of the province's agencies, boards, and commissions. About 50 per cent of the government's annual operating expenditures are administered by these provincial agencies, of which there are almost 250.

Mr. Speaker, this bill builds upon the work done by a provincial task force struck by our Premier in 2007. In all, the task force made 15 recommendations to ensure that the right policies and best practices are in place for our agencies, boards, and commissions to deliver on their mandates. The task force's first recommendation was the introduction of legislation to provide to agency governance frameworks and standards reflecting the importance of Alberta's agencies.

In February 2008 this government released its public agencies governance framework, elaborating on the recommendations of the task force. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that implementation of the public agencies governance framework is under way in all government departments. With that, I would ask that all members join me in support of this important bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 32 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during question period the Member for Calgary-Varsity asked questions regarding the UN convention on the rights of the child. The member suggested that our province did not sign or support the convention. In fact, our province formally supported the convention in a letter from former Premier Ralph Klein to former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien dated January 13, 1999. Neither our province nor any other province signed the convention since signing international agreements is the constitutional responsibility of the federal government. I'm pleased to table the appropriate number of copies of the letter of support as well as the convention itself.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a document from two constituents, Claude and Eugenie Dube. These are constituents that are very upset over the government's plan to triple the Blue Cross nongroup premiums. They're very frustrated that the government is increasing the money it gives to the oil and gas sector but increasing the burden on Albertans, and they note especially older Albertans. They feel the government had no mandate to make these changes and should not make changes without extensive public consultation. I have the required five copies.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the five copies of a Ducks Unlimited brochure: A Single Purpose; A Profound Effect. Ducks Unlimited works in consultation and collaboration with a number of Alberta fish and game associations for protecting and restoring habitat. It may seem paradoxical to the uninformed, but hunters and fishermen are among Alberta's most dedicated conservationists.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of tablings with the appropriate number of copies of each. The first is a document from the Manitoba Department of Justice, and it's regarding the appointment of independent counsel. It's a policy document.

Secondly, there's a document from the B.C. government, the Crown counsel policy manual. It, again, outlines the appointment a special prosecutor in cases where there is significant potential for real or perceived improper influence in prosecutorial decision-making.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a petition "to establish a Special Needs taskforce to address the failure of current policies, procedures and practices to adequately serve the exceptional and individual educational needs of all students in the District." This petition was originally presented to the Edmonton public school board.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, according to Standing Order 7(7) I must now notify you that it's 3 o'clock. The Routine terminates. We're into Orders of the Day.

### 3:00 Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** Before I recognize the hon. member, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (reversion)

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was remiss earlier in introducing my guests earlier than they should have been, and they weren't there. Now they're here, and I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the House my guests, Madeline Rainey and her 16-year-old son, Connor, who are seated in the public gallery. Madeline and Connor presented a petition to the Edmonton public school board on January 13 seeking more immediate benefits for the district's special-needs students. Madeline participates in the board's consultation, Setting the Direction for Special Education. I would now ask both Madeline and Connor to rise in their places and receive the warm, traditional welcome of this Assembly.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 21 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2009

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce third reading of Bill 21, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2009.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise and enter into third reading debate on Bill 21, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2009. This is a supplementary supply act that seeks to get \$127 million and change in extra spending primarily for the ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, Employment and Immigration, and Transportation as well as some \$750,000 for the office of the Auditor General. This is extra money – we've made the point before – in and of itself not a dramatic amount of money above and beyond the budget. But this is the second time that this government has been before the House in this fiscal year seeking supplementary funds. We think the government should do a better job of budgeting. We have made this point on a number of occasions before this, and we suspect that we will be continuing to make that point on into the next fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue has been bandied about a lot. It's a similar discussion that's been raised over a number of years. I think, however, we need to also raise a different concern in light of news over the last day or two.

This is supplementary supply; in other words, this is money that in many cases is there to look after budget overruns. One of my concerns is that we have a government that overruns its budget year after year after year. We also have a budget that pays multi multimillion-dollar bonuses to its senior management, apparently for achievement. I suppose that if the achievement is to blow your budget, then the bonuses may be in order. I think it's important for this government to establish an achievement factor for its senior management to stay on budget. I can't imagine – and I'm saying this very genuinely – except in the most extraordinary circumstances why a senior official who allows a budget to go past its mark, allows a government department to spend more than is budgeted by this Assembly would then be justified in getting a bonus. The two just don't add up.

Mr. Speaker, you know, with this fine history in this Assembly we'll remember the days 20 years ago or more, when budgets were taken extremely seriously and it was, as I've said before, a career move for a public servant to blow through a budget. Now it seems that we're in a situation where senior public servants get a bonus even if the budget is blown.

I think we are entering an era of a new attitude towards public responsibility for sticking to budgets, and I hope this is the beginning of that. I would hope that to help create an atmosphere where we don't need to come back for repeated supplementary supply bills every year, this government establishes as an achievement criteria for senior managers staying on budget. Frankly, they should be well aware that if they go through the budget, unless there are extraordinary circumstances, there is no bonus. It should be pretty much as simple as that.

Those are the constraints that many, many people in Alberta have to live by in their own domestic households. Those are the constraints that many, many businesses in Alberta have to live by. Frankly, those are the constraints that the caucus has to live by. We have a budget, and we have absolutely no opportunity nor any desire to go through the budget. We have the budget, and we live within that budget.

I think it's very important to get the message through to the members of this Assembly that paying bonuses to senior managers who allow their budgets to be broken should be unacceptable. There should be no bonuses in those circumstances. I think, maybe, the fact that this government has been paying bonuses regardless of whether budgets were met or not has contributed to this kind of bill that we have right now coming forward, which is at least a second supplementary supply bill.

I want to get that on the record, Mr. Speaker. I'm not particularly pleased that we have this bill here. I wasn't very pleased that we had a supplementary supply bill just a few months ago. I think that now we are beginning to uncover some of the organizational dynamics that lead to this occurring repeatedly, which is that, apparently, senior management bonuses are not tied to living within budgets. My view, my message today is that from here on in they should be.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for the question-and-response portion. The hon. Government House Leader on this point.



**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member had an opportunity to look at the third-quarter results and, if he did so, whether he is aware of or whether he just wilfully ignored the fact that the operating budget of the government is pretty much on track for what it was budgeted at. The difference that might be anticipated in terms of if there was a deficit at the end of this year was clearly generated by a loss of revenue in the investment portfolio of the heritage trust fund and not a problem created by any of our dedicated civil service, who work long hours on behalf of the people of Alberta, going into deficit.

Now, he may be referring as well, and I think he did refer as well, to the fact that, of course, coming back for supplementary supply means that you're asking for more revenue. He indicated that businesses and households set budgets and then live within them and that government should be expected to. I'm not sure where he's been living, but in the world that I live in, people take a look at their resources on an ongoing basis and determine whether or not, given the nature of the resources that they have on an ongoing basis, those resources can be applied to the needs that arise on an ongoing basis or not. I know of no business nor of any household which sets a rigid parameter once a year and then tries to live in it. Is he living in the same world that I'm in?

**Dr. Taft:** Well, that's a unique sort of question. I'm not sure what planet the minister is living on. I know I live right here in Edmonton, and I live right here in Alberta, and I don't have the benefits of the tremendous resources that this minister has. I also know that people like the large number of seniors in my constituency who are on fixed incomes are stuck. They can't vote themselves a higher income in December and then vote themselves another higher income in February or March.

There's no question that the great majority of Alberta's public servants are dedicated and they're hard working, but there's also no question that this government has consistently, year after year for any number of years now, turned out to have spent considerably more at the end of the year than it said it was going to at the beginning of the year. That's a problem, and it's a problem that we need to address. I look to the President of the Treasury Board from here on in to help address it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood first, then the hon. President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much. I wanted to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview whether or not he thinks bonuses, in fact, make any sense at all even in, perhaps, better times and what uses they might accomplish.

3:10

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a great question and probably an issue that needs a lot more debate here. I think we need to question the whole issue of bonuses for performance. Public officials are paid to do a job, and they're expected to do that job well. If they do the job well, then maybe there's an incremental raise or something, but to import the whole notion of bonuses into the public service needs some very serious thinking. I think it opens up all kinds of questions about what motivations are and what bonuses are given for. If one particular assistant deputy minister gets a bonus, do they all get the bonus? How is that managed?

This was an innovation, if you want to call it that, that was brought in, you know, several years ago. I think it's time that we as

an Assembly and, I hope, the government caucus as a caucus asked itself the whole question: do we want a bonus system within the public service? Is it a good idea even in principle? Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I was not terribly pleased when I saw this brought forward for the public service. I think – and I say this in part as a former public servant – public servants are paid to be professionals, to do a good job. If they do that job, they get paid. They don't need a bonus, in my view. This was, I think, a dubious policy to begin with, and I think that it's one that should be debated fully in this Assembly.

Thank you.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** I'm wondering if the hon. member is going to remain firm and rigid in his stance on overruns with the office of the Auditor General.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I don't have the figures in front of me. There is – what? – something like \$700,000 in the budget overrun.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, we're dealing with Bill 21.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to deal with the question of the supplementary estimates and, in particular, some of the revelations that we've seen when it comes to bonuses. You know, we addressed this question in our caucus. The Premier has been talking about the great financial resources that our caucus receives, encouraging us to give some of our money to the Auditor General to help him out and so on. I think, frankly, it's just a little bit silly.

One of the things that we did was to really ask ourselves hard questions about: what are you actually trying to accomplish with the use of bonuses? We have a very hard-working, dedicated, and capable staff, and they are very committed to the goals of our caucus. We want to make sure to the extent of our capacity that they're compensated for that.

If you take it in the question of the government, if you want to look at the government, you need to ask what it is you're going to get from a bonus. If you want the public employees, the senior management in given departments to save money, I think that's the kind of instruction you want to give them, but if you give them financial incentives to do that, I think that you run a risk.

If, in fact, saving money is the objective that's set for the deputy minister or the ADMs, then what kind of behaviour are they going to enter into when their job is to deliver the services in the best possible way, make sure the public gets value for money, and make sure that their programs are run as efficiently and as effectively as possible. You distort that when you try to incent a particular behaviour in the government service. You might find, for example, that programs were cut or spending was cut when it wasn't what was intended, when the service that the public might receive might be impacted, or people weren't hired and, as a result, there were longer waiting lists. I can see all kinds of reasons why bonuses based on savings in the department could create distortions in the carrying out of the government's policy and the programs that people depend on, but more to the point is that I don't think the people of this province get it.

When the government is starting to talk to them about tightening their belts, and the hon. President of the Treasury Board, you know, who has made a number of comments off message, from what I can tell, with what the Premier and the Provincial Treasurer have been saying, about how we're going to be into cutting as we go forward into this period, my fear is that his faction in the Tory caucus is

going to find a way to force the government to return to the bad old days of Premier Ralph Klein, when these enormous cuts took place from which we still haven't recovered. And this is an inappropriate response to the current situation.

If we're in fact going to be cutting, then I presume that some people might actually lose their jobs. I don't know if that's the government's intent or if the provincial finance minister's budget will call for that, but clearly the government is sending among its various mixed messages a message that we all have to tighten our belts and that there'll be reductions in spending and, presumably, reductions in programs. It's too early to tell whether there are going to be actual layoffs in the public service, but I think those employees who are just next to the door as we enter into this recession are going to be looking at their bosses and wondering why in Justice, for example, there are bonuses worth \$5.8 million being paid; in Service Alberta \$3.9 million; in Finance \$3.6 million. It goes on and on, millions and millions of dollars, \$40 million in bonuses for which the government has given no clear objectives on which they expect to be paid.

I think that when you look at what's going on in the United States, you see a real difference. You see a difference between how the politicians of both the Republican and Democratic parties respond to the public outrage there about bonuses and how this government deals with it. You know, in the United States there's genuine anger, and the politicians are holding people accountable for taking money and spending it on bonuses. Here it's business as usual. This government doesn't seem to get that the rules have changed and public expectations have changed. The economy has changed. There has been a real change in almost everything to do with business, jobs, government, public programs. It has all been affected, and there's a profoundly different way of looking at things and doing things. This government is living in the past and has not adjusted.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that I think that other employees, the unions, and ordinary Albertans are looking at what this government is doing. By insisting on going ahead with these bonuses, in fact, I think the government is sending a different message. It's trying to reduce expectations, but it is in fact raising expectations, and I think that there are going to be political consequences from that.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that I think we should change the way we look at things. I want to, you know, just indicate that there were some relevant comments that were made just today in the *Globe and Mail*. Mr. David Dodge, a former governor of the Bank of Canada, said that those that expect that we're going to have a recovery in this year are dreaming in technicolour. So I hope that the members opposite are enjoying their dream, but I think that it's pretty clear to me that they are off base on where they see this economy going. I think that the supplementary estimates, I think the upcoming budget are all going to send us off the track unless the government gets a little bit more realistic about where the economy is and what public expectations are today.

I think the public expects that there will be a stimulus approach but that governments have a responsibility to make sure that public money is spent where it can help the ordinary folks of this province or wherever the jurisdiction is and not spent on people who are already very well off. Again, I think the government is out of touch with the public on this and, frankly, I think that there is going to be some public anger about the government's failure to listen.

Mr. Speaker, I think that with that, I will take my seat. Another person might want to contribute.

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to maybe clarify for me and for the 6,100 civil servants eligible for some type of bonuses in what way he's able to equate a civil service that by any stretch of the imagination has achieved virtually all the goals they've set out to do in difficult times, working under existing contract conditions that they were hired under for the year that they've just completed, how the hon. member is able to make the leap that somehow this equates to bonuses some corporate executive from a financial-sector company in the States that has mismanaged hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars, truly a part of a global meltdown that was perpetrated on grounds that have nothing to do with the civil servants that perform every day for the people of Alberta on our behalf. How could he possibly in the same statement put these Albertans, these people that live here and work for the people of Alberta, in the same category as executives of a private company going to the taxpayers of the United States for compensation and a bailout?

I mean, Mr. Speaker, in your opening words this morning, in your prayer, you asked for integrity and honesty. I guess some of us missed that part of your opening prayer. I would sure like the hon. member to make it perfectly clear to these people how he made that connection.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, it's this government that entered into those agreements. It's this government that decided that well-paid civil servants, highly paid at a high senior level, deserved very, very wealthy bonuses. It's this government that is continuing to go in that direction. Now, I want to say that this government has a responsibility to adjust itself to the changing times, and paying out bonuses when there also are people losing their jobs just doesn't fit with what ordinary Albertans think. That's what I think.

I don't know what he's holding up there, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to say that ordinary Albertans in this day who are losing their jobs are looking at this government paying \$40 million in bonuses, and they're wondering why the government is so out of touch with their lives, with their priorities. Those are the kinds of things that I think this government needs to take into account.

I believe that the people who are losing their jobs – and there are thousands of them; there are 30,000 in just two months – are wanting to know what the government is doing, whether the government gets it. I don't think the government does get it, Mr. Speaker. I think the government is out of touch with those people.

Their agreement to enter into these agreements for these bonuses at the same time as they're not bringing forward long-term care beds, for example, which is causing backups in our health care system, their failure to deal with the whole question of overcrowding in foster homes and the very poor compensation that foster parents get in this province, their failure to deal with environmental questions – the terrible conditions that continue to exist in our long-term care facilities are really a tragedy. People like that, people like senior citizens who are being asked to pay more for their drugs, are looking at the money that is being spent on these bonuses because the government entered into what I consider to be an ill-advised agreement.

If we take a look at the question of the Auditor General and his budget, there are some very important audits that the Auditor General is going to have to defer or cancel, things like water safety, things like food safety, things like children in care. He needs a couple of million dollars to do that.

**The Speaker:** Alas, hon. member, the time has expired.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Bill 22**  
**Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2009**

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure to rise and introduce third reading of Bill 22, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2009, so that we can probably spend, oh, I'd guess another hour on subjects completely unrelated to the content and intent of the bill. However, if that's the wish of the opposition, we're more than happy to oblige.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and join debate at third reading on Bill 22, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2009. I think I would be remiss if I didn't start out by saying that, of course, if the government wishes to shorten the time involved in debate on this bill or the previous bill or any other, all they have to do is not avail themselves of 29(2)(a). You don't have to ask the question. You won't stretch it out by another five minutes per speech per speaker.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** It just gets better.

**Mr. Taylor:** It does, doesn't it?  
The Minister of Transportation is having a whale of a time.

**Mr. Ouellette:** That's because I like asking you questions.

**Mr. Taylor:** But on to the matter at hand, which is worth considerably more money than the last bill that we debated. This one's worth about \$10 billion, and as the Premier himself pointed out in question period a few times I think this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, we're just a couple of weeks away from the end of the 2008-2009 fiscal year. The government clearly needs the money, or at least some of the money, a good chunk of the money, that it is asking for in Bill 22 to keep the lights on, the furnace humming until such time as it's time to turn on the air conditioning, and the bonuses rolling while we debate the budget and pass it so that it can come into effect.

3:30

I will point out once again, Mr. Speaker – and I've mentioned this a couple of times – that there really is no excuse for the fact that we have not yet even heard the budget, begun debate on the budget, that we won't hear the budget until April 7. We came back into this House on Tuesday, February 10. If I'm wrong about this, I'd be interested to hear the minister of finance's defence about this. We could have and should have had that budget in front of us by Tuesday, February 24, two weeks later. There was a time when we had a set of temporary standing orders – of course, they have, as you know, since lapsed – that actually specified the start date for the spring session and the fact that a budget would be brought in by the government a set period of time after that. I believe the period of time was 10 days or two weeks.

Had we followed those rules, which are not the rules currently, I'll grant you that, we would have had the budget in front of us on February 24. Here it is March 18, and we would be well into, in fact

we would be very, very nearly finished Committee of Supply debate of the budget. We'd be ready to move the budget through its final stages. We'd be ready to pass and proclaim the budget, all of that in time for the beginning of the new fiscal year. We wouldn't need to be doing Bill 22.

But they chose to operate a different way, an inefficient way, a sort of: "Oh, you know, let's just go along here, see how things go. We'll get around to this eventually. We don't really know what the price of oil is going to be. We don't really know what the price of natural gas is going to be, don't really have a good handle on the exchange rate for the fiscal year going forward." I don't know why we think we'll have a better handle on all that on April 7 than we would've on February 24. Nevertheless, it gives us an excuse not to get down to business quite so quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that later on this afternoon – and I believe that if the government had its way, it would be earlier on this afternoon – we will resume Committee of the Whole debate of Bill 18, which they are in an all-fired rush to get through this House in time for April 1, when TILMA comes into effect, so that they don't caught with their knickers down, if that's not unparliamentary. I didn't intend it in that way.

**The Speaker:** Carry on. It's not unparliamentary.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you.

I'm reminded again that, you know, they've had plenty of time to get to work on this thing. I don't know what they do in the off-season. Maybe they work on their golf game down in Arizona. I don't know what it is because they sure as heck don't get any more efficient.

**Mr. Hancock:** Who's living in the past now?

**Mr. Taylor:** I hear the Minister of Education over there chirping away like a songbird, but I'm not in the mood for birdwatching this afternoon, so I'll just ignore him.

That brings us back to Bill 22. Bill 22 asks for \$10 billion in approved spending to get us through the next few weeks. Yes, I understand, Mr. Speaker, that some of that has to be front-loaded because it's more expensive to run a government at the beginning of the fiscal year than it is towards the end of the fiscal year. At least, that's what they tell us at the beginning of the fiscal year. Then they come back once or twice partway through the fiscal year and ask for more money in sup supply because I guess they underestimated their ability to spend. But I digress.

This is \$10 billion that we're being asked to approve, \$10 billion with no explanation other than: "Well, you know what? This is the way we always do it. We can't explain it to you now because you're going to have to wait for the budget." It gives me the willies.

**Mr. Hehr:** The willies?

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes, the willies. The willies.

It gives me the willies to consider approving this request when I look at the history of inefficiency and dawdling and goofing around involved with this government. They can't seem to bring anything to the table in a timely fashion. It's always at the last minute, and, gosh, we've got to ram this through. They either can't organize a two-car funeral, or they're perfectly capable of organizing a two-car funeral. They just want to make sure that that two-car funeral is able to run a bunch of red lights without anybody having the authority or the time to work out a way to stop them.

So \$10 billion up for grabs, ladies and gentlemen. Have at 'er. I'm done for now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Additional participants? Actually, we have 29(2)(a) first. Anybody want to participate? Oh, no. That's right. We just started this one. Sorry about that. I was so befuddled there by his expressive language: knickers, willies, dawdling, and two-car funerals. There was a speech around all of that, too.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, please.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and enter debate on interim supply briefing. As my colleague from Calgary-Currie surmised, this is coming at a time when we should already have a full budget prepared and have things going along in some fashion, where we'd have, then, school boards, cities, all of us here on the opposition benches, and everyone on the government side aware of what our plans are in this province. Then everyone could go forward and build their year accordingly and go off and do the best they can in what are, no doubt, some harder economic times. We've seen many governments around Canada, including the federal government, seemingly be able to get there a little bit quicker than we have here in Alberta.

You know, it even begs the question. Not really to get to whether this is going to be a stimulus budget or whether it's going to be a status quo budget or whether it's going to be a cutting budget: regardless of that, you know, you seem to be limiting the effect of whatever your budget is going to be, bringing it in so late. For instance, if you were going to stimulate, well, the longer you waited, the worse off it apparently is going to get. If you were going to cut, well, I guess that time is still available, so I guess you won't be in as much of a quandary.

Nevertheless, all I'm saying is that it does limit the effectiveness of what, in fact, it's going to be doing and what, in fact, our many boards, organizations, charities, cities are going to do that depends on budgets being brought in in a reasonable amount of time to be able to develop their plans accordingly. In this province it's generally the provincial government that has the gold, and a lot of times our other people are reliant on at least getting some information to them on what they can anticipate to run services to help support Albertans.

I guess another point of it is the fact that this is a rather large number, \$10 billion. Again, if we look at the spending that this government has done – I don't think I'm speaking out of turn; the numbers could be higher, could be a little lower – it spends approximately 24 or 23 per cent more than Ontario, some 30 points higher than British Columbia and others. There's no doubt there is a lot of spending going on here in Alberta. There are arguments for that. I concede some of that. Yet there seems to be a lot of stuff that when you look around and compare Alberta's situation, the state of some of our infrastructure, the state of some of our schools, the state of our hospital wait times, for instance – you know, given the fact that we've had more money, spent more money, and all of this stuff, the results on what comes back should be better.

In fact, I think there's an argument to say that it's not better. Any of the results we get back on national standards on wait times, for instance, say that we're in the middle of the pack. You see that whether we're getting the value for dollar out of our spending. That is, I guess, an argument to be made.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to put my oar in the water, at least give some tentative comments on Bill 22, and I thank you for allowing me that time.

3:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available should there be questions.

There being none – two members have risen at the same time. The hon. Government House Leader.

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

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

**The Chair:** The chair will now call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 18 Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

**The Chair:** We will continue on amendment A2. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I do want to get a few more remarks on the record from my conversation of yesterday. My amendment, I believe, is very important. I think it is an amendment that will protect democracy and the way this House operates. I'm asking that the entire section 5 be amended by striking out that whole section in Bill 18. My reasons for that are that I think that in the end this bill is ripe for a constitutional challenge.

We need to withdraw the whole section 5. It's on page 6 of the hard copy of the bill, and it's section 7(1). The heading is Regulations. It says that the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is cabinet, "may make regulations in respect of matters relating to the implementation of the Agreement that the Minister considers are not provided for or are insufficiently provided for in this Schedule or any enactment." It goes on in the next section, which is the one that I feel gives the most problem, that a regulation made under subsection (1) "may suspend the application of or modify a provision of an Act or regulation or may substitute another provision in place of a provision."

It's the act that is the problem. How can something that has taken place in this House, which is a legislated act, be changed in the backrooms by cabinet? It boggles my mind to think of what else could be changed under the same rules if this one goes forward. It delegates the power, as I've said, of the House to the cabinet. Parliamentary tradition is that what's created by the Legislature must come back to the Legislature to be changed. We create and we can change. One of the ways that is done is through the legislated act. Yes, regulations are done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which then, of course, is cabinet. Actually, I'm seeing more and more things being given over to the power of regulations which, I believe, really should have been in legislation.

In amending this, we're talking about the retroactivity of regulations. I'm not sure that I know of any organization or, to use a sport analogy, any sport where you actually change the rules in the middle of the game. You can't try to stop that forward halfway over the blue line and say: "Oh, whoops. We've just changed. Go back and start over again." It doesn't work like that. We cannot, in my mind, in all good conscience go back. How do you change the rules? How do you go back to someone and say, "Everything you've been doing is wrong, and whether you like it or not, this is the way it's going to be"?

I can hear some of the responses being that part of this is collateral damage. Collateral damage is a pretty powerful statement. It's, to me, a statement of disrespect. It's a statement of: too bad. So when I hear those kinds of things or when I suspect that that might be part

of the thinking, I question, perhaps, the ethics that are behind that kind of a consequence. The consequences should really only go forward, and in this bill, in my mind, they should go forward from proclamation even, not from the date of the passing of the bill.

There is a rush in the House, as we know, to get this bill through by April 1 because that's the deadline for TILMA. It has to be signed, sealed, and delivered by that date. There have been two years to get this work done. Why is there never, it would appear, any time for outside eyes to look at these deals? That's why in the end often amendments are necessary and, I believe, especially this amendment of mine is necessary. Had these types of things been discussed over the last two years or even within the last six months, it would have given a much greater opportunity for other eyes to look at it. By other eyes, I guess, at this point I mean mine because I'm bringing the amendment forward.

I hope that I'm wrong, but I think that there are people in the House that haven't really looked at this carefully enough to realize the actual ramifications of being able to change an act in this House in the backrooms and not have it come back to the table, where it belongs. As I've mentioned, the ethics behind this, I think, are questionable.

One of the last things I'd like to comment on is that I really believe this leaves itself open to a court challenge. I think that there will be one further down the road. What a waste of time that would be. If we had done it right in the first place, if perhaps we had started this process earlier in the two-year window that was given the government when they signed this with B.C. two years ago, perhaps this conversation would never have had to take place. Should there be a court challenge further on, what a waste of time it would have been, all because we have to get this signed within the next two weeks. Of course, we all know that the House will be in constituency weeks for the next two, so it has to be signed before we return.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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

3:50

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I rise in support of the amendment that has been brought forward by the Member for Lethbridge-East. It's almost exactly the amendment that I was hoping to see. I think I might have been a little less firm than her and might have left in the ability for the cabinet to change the regulations. I had spoken in second and earlier in committee of my great fear and objection to the clause in the bill under the government organization section that would allow for the cabinet to make changes to existing pieces of legislation.

I've taken the opportunity from yesterday to today to do a bit more work in looking at this. I really take issue with this bill proposing that the Legislature would abdicate to cabinet the power to change an act and, further, to change an act retroactively by two years. I have always objected to the preponderance, the choices this government makes to put shell bills in place and to depend upon the power to make regulations for the government to carry on business. Frankly, to me it's increasingly signalling that the government is not as good a manager as it likes to think itself in that it has to give itself so many outs and so much flexibility to get around when it makes mistakes.

That's what this is about. They're trying to cover their posterior extensions to make sure that . . . [interjections] Think about it; it'll come to you. If and when TILMA comes into play, if they've forgotten something or if Alberta gets called on one of the clauses in TILMA, they have the ability to go back and change our legislation so that we don't get called on it again. Of course, what this

government has signed on to with the TILMA agreement is a number of very vague clauses, so we really don't know how this is going to play out.

They've also signed on to something that says that if they're found lacking or in default by one of the tribunal, the offending party, which in this case may well be the government, can be fined for each and every instance that it has been found in default. If we're talking about something that's happened under an act, they could possibly be fined multiple times for, essentially, the same egregious error. If it's happened more than once, for example, they would pay the fine for every single time it's happened under the auspices of an act.

One, what does that raise for us? The need to have cover-your-butt legislation because they're anticipating that there are going to be problems with it. I guess I should congratulate them on having a plan and anticipating that things might go wrong, seeing as I've held them to account and found fault with them for not doing that in the past on things like the budget. But, truly, did we need to cast such a wide net here?

I think this is a very dangerous precedent. This government likes to try stuff, and then they just settle right into it like an old armchair. They just pull that afghan around their shoulders. They just settle right in and put their feet up on the settee, pour themselves a drink, and get the clicker. They just settle in and love that new way of doing things, and they're very hard to move out of that armchair of comfort that they have created for themselves with legislation.

As has been mentioned, I believe this is unconstitutional. I'm just going to talk a little bit about that. One of the ways that you can sort of get a sense of if this is wrong is by looking at different levels, and you do expect a consistency. I sort of briefly referred to one of the areas yesterday although I think I might have given a reference in error. But let's look at a similar situation, which would be the Committee of the Whole taking on responsibility that is a power that is reserved for the Legislature. Here I'll quote *Bourinot*, page 527. It says that the committee "have no power to extinguish a bill, that power [being] retained by the house itself." So even when we're talking about a situation like we're in today where we're in Committee of the Whole, this committee has limited powers. Those are in fact outlined and set out. It's notated how this is different in our standing orders and then further on in all of our other parliamentary books. We don't have the power in this committee to do everything that the full Legislature can, nor should we. There is a place for it.

What's being attempted here is a move by government to try and get the Legislature to abdicate its power back to the cabinet to be able to change this legislation. That's essentially what's happening here. I am certain that there will be a constitutional challenge on this. I already quoted you yesterday the examples of where that abdication has been upheld. Really, that has only been upheld by the courts in a situation of extremity. That extremity was war, and we are nowhere close to war here. There is no civil strife. There is no War Measures Act in place here. There has been no mobilizing of military force on behalf of the government. There's been no legislation brought into place to give it other extraordinary powers to act in a time of civil unrest and strife.

So to make a claim that somehow we are in a situation of dire straits and that the cabinet would need to have that power for some reason is unsupported. I have heard no compelling arguments from the government that would persuade me that we are in such dire straits in this province, that things are in such extremes that we would need to be acting as though we were under an extraordinary measure like the War Measures Act.

What we're talking about is a trade agreement. Let's get some common sense here. We are talking about a trade agreement. We're not talking about war. We're not talking about civil insurrection.

We're talking about the implementation of a trade agreement that's supposed to be a good thing. It's supposed to enhance the ability of people to work in different provinces, the ability of businesses to make money and reduce red tape. That is the hopeful view of that.

Now, in fact, there have been a number of things go very wrong with TILMA. For starters, we were not able to debate it in this House, unlike in B.C. When we do get a chance to look at it, it's so vague in some cases that you actually cannot anticipate what might flow from some of those sections. I know that some of my colleagues are better versed on that and will likely speak to it in more detail, but here we already are seeing acts that are projecting the government's unease with its position and that it has done everything that it should be doing in order to progress to a smooth transition to TILMA on the 1st of April.

Yesterday I had said that there was no time limit and that the minister had stated that there was, and I had looked in the legislation and I disagreed with him. It's a wonder of this House having the live audio streaming because, of course, by the time I got back to my office, there was an e-mail saying: you were wrong. Okay. Fair enough. What has been said to me – and this may well be true – is in section 7(4) of the Government Organization Act, appearing midway down page 7 of the hard copy of the act, a regulation made under subsection (1), which is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations in respect of matters that the minister considers are not provided for. Then it goes on in subsection (2) to talk about regulations that are made under the previous section may suspend the application of or modify a provision of an act.

4:00

I think it could be argued and I'll entertain the argument that, in fact, an act is covered under this provision, subsection (4). Really, it's saying that that's the time limit, that "a regulation made under subsection (1) is repealed on the earliest of the following." Then it lists some three conditions:

- (a) the coming into force of an amendment to a statute that provides for the matter [that's being] dealt with in the regulation;
- (b) the coming into force of a regulation that repeals the regulation made under subsection (1);
- (c) the expiration of 3 years from the day that the regulation
  - (i) comes into force, if the regulation is not retroactive, or
  - (ii) is filed with the Registrar of Regulations.

Now, I'll tell you why I'm still uneasy. We're still talking about regulations. We have not admitted that we're actually talking about changing an act, and that's where part of my unease is, but it may well be that that wording does indeed cover subsection 2(a), which is talking about modifying an act.

But we are still talking about giving cabinet the power to modify any act for a period of up to three years and retroactively two years, back to April 1, 2007, so we're actually talking about a five-year window for which cabinet gets to play around with changing legislation, and, one, I don't think cabinet should be allowed to change legislation. It perverts the whole sense of what this Chamber is about and the fact that there are a variety of representatives here, that there are people here that are not from the governing party, that it does bring an alternative voice, an alternative eye, and, I hope, a critical eye to the proceedings. That's the point of this Chamber. That's why it is supposed to come back here. To leave it in the hands of a group who have a shared interest in something that is not necessarily the shared interest of the whole Chamber is what is so offensive to this scheme.

I will put that argument to one side, that it does allow for a three-year time limit. But as I say, I still don't accept that. I don't think it's acceptable under any conditions to be able to do this. We're

talking about a trade agreement. Why does the government need to be able to subvert this Assembly, subvert the number of people that voted for those of us in here in order to facilitate a trade agreement that is primarily to the advantage of the private sector? That's the trail that really starts to cause me concern. We're here as a democratically elected institution, and what we're seeing is legislation to make us all bend over backwards to facilitate a bunch of people doing business. I don't find that an acceptable reason to diminish the importance of this Assembly. It's not a good enough reason, nor have I heard a compelling argument from anybody on the government side as to why this should be acceptable.

I was reminded as I was musing aloud about this – well, no, I'll have to be honest; I was probably raging aloud about it – of the former Premier Peter Lougheed speaking at the 100th anniversary banquet for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and reminding us all very clearly that the penultimate body was the Legislature, not the government, and that the government is responsible to the Legislature. I am reminded of that very much today and yesterday as we look at what is contemplated in this act.

I know I don't have much hope of swaying the votes of this government caucus. Clearly, this has been decided as usual behind your closed doors. You are determined to proceed with this. But I think it shows such disdain for this House, and it's another example of how low the government's regard is for this very Chamber that it would, you know, organize its caucus to stand behind something that diminished the very Assembly that gives that government any kind of authority at all.

The other part of that argument is that – and the government's very proud of itself that it has 72 members elected here out of the 83. But you know what? Happily, we have an Electoral Boundaries Commission coming up because we had an awful lot of people in Alberta who did not vote for the government, and their votes are not reflected in the distribution of seats in this House. I think some people argue that it's 30 per cent or 40 per cent of the people in total that voted that did not vote for this government, and their votes are not being reflected in the seat distribution here and certainly not in the actions the government is bent on taking.

I think that this action, if followed through with, signals to me that there are much more insidious things to come. If the government can do this to this Assembly based on upholding a trade agreement, then I suspect that there is much more to come. How badly did the government negotiate this trade agreement if it's in that position of being fearful of what the consequences of the agreement are? From my reading, such as it is, around what's in this agreement, I can't say that I think the government did a real bang-up job negotiating on our behalf. I hope that this will be to the benefit of Albertans, all Albertans, but I'm not convinced of that. I continue to be concerned with how vague that agreement is and how much authority has been shifted away from the people that are in fact elected to wield that authority and to debate those kinds of bills.

I realize that my time is almost up, Mr. Chairman. I certainly appreciate the opportunity that my colleagues have given me to get in on this particular debate. I would urge my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to support this amendment A2, as brought forward by my colleague from Lethbridge-East, and not allow this Legislature to essentially abdicate its responsibility by delegating the authority that this bill contemplates to an inferior body. That's not to say that I see cabinet as being inferior in any way, but it is an inferior body when we look at the ranking of the legislative authorities. I think that this has serious and far-reaching implications for all of us and for this institution, and I urge my colleague to vote for this amendment, which would remove the clause from the bill that I find so offensive.

Thank you for that opportunity, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Before I recognize the next member, may we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Introduction of Guests**  
(*reversion*)

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce two guests here from West Fraser Timber. They're here meeting some folks in the Legislature. It's great to talk about this industry, and I'm very proud of the facilities that they own throughout the province. The West Fraser folks own facilities in Hinton, Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, Slave Lake, Edmonton, and of course in Whitecourt. They employ hundreds of people in those mills and hundreds of contractors throughout this province. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Mr. Hank Ketchum and Wayne Clogg. I'd ask them both to stand up and receive the warm greeting of this Assembly. I think they're also here to get their citizenship papers from Alberta.

Thank you.

4:10

**Bill 18**

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

(*continued*)

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is an honour and privilege to get up and speak in support of this amendment. The difficult thing is that I'm going after the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, who always does such a good job describing and saying many of the things that want to come out of my mouth but rarely do. Nevertheless, I will try and follow her.

What I'd like to point out and continue on with is the fact that what we find, I guess, so odious about the bill is that we are in fact diminishing what we are supposed to do in this Legislature, which is to give us an opportunity to debate, to hear or flesh out the ideas of the day, to contact our constituents, to have our constituents contact us. For better or for worse or even if the opposition is totally out to lunch or even on the rare occasion, maybe, that the government is out to lunch, we at least have that opportunity to come here and discuss this in a fair and reasonable fashion in the light of day, so to speak, so that members of the press gallery can then report on this, and it's an honest and open government. Transparency would be paramount.

When we have a bill like this, that reverts decisions so that decisions can be made in regulations and that regulations can then be changed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council or cabinet, and then they can make any change to whatever bill or legislation, in this case TILMA, that is going forward and make that change up to two years back and three years forward – five years: that's a pretty large window of opportunity for the Alberta public, people who voted for us to come here, not to hear about what is actually happening to the bill.

On that front, simply put, I think that's unacceptable. We see this happening time and time again on more and more bills, and it essentially diminishes the role of what we, in fact, do here. Maybe that has some sort of tie-off. By no means am I going to blame this government entirely for the lack of voter turnout that happened last time. You know, let's face it. It's happening all around Canada, in

Alberta more so than other parts. We can quibble around the edges as to why this is in fact happening.

If we ever want to take democracy to that next level, to be seen to be engaging our population, to be really respecting what they say and really see what we do up here in the Legislature, I don't think we're serving that goal by moving decisions to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. It just simply is counterintuitive to my thinking, that this will foster a spirit of democracy throughout Alberta, that it will really engage grade 3 students around the province into saying: jeepers, the Legislature is something I want to pay attention to. Guess what? Why pay attention to the Legislature when all the big decisions are made behind closed doors, behind the veil of secrecy that is beginning to cloak this government?

If that is maybe, you know, one of the reasons why we want to support this amendment, I think it's a good reason to support it. Let's take a look. I hear in Members' Statements from both members on this side of the House and members on that side that, you know, we're worried about democracy; we want to re-engage the public; we want to get people out to vote. That's all fine and dandy. But when we do actions like this, that actually diminish our role as legislators, I don't think that's backing up what, in fact, we're doing here. It's disingenuous to sort of do one thing and say another. We might as well start acting in a way that's in accordance with what we're saying, that we want democracy to be revitalized and the spirit of debate to continue.

On that note, those are my comments as to why I support this amendment, why I believe it is an important amendment that will help strengthen Alberta's democracy and one that I hope all members of this House will support.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chase:** No one know what goes on behind closed doors. That should be our Alberta theme song. Last week we spent a great deal of time talking about the mushroom as an emblem for Alberta, and that's how the government is treating its people: putting them behind closed doors under a layer of we all know what: fertilizer, for the sake of the ears that may be tuned into the program today.

This government doesn't live up to its title of Progressive Conservative. The government doesn't seem to know whether it's progressive or regressive. We talked about three steps forward, two steps back, five steps in total. If the government had any kind of confidence in its own legislation, it wouldn't have to hop into its H.G. Wells updated version of the time machine and go back in time with a giant bottle of whiteout to erase its trace. It's a great concern.

This government over the last number of years, under which I've had the pleasure to serve, has moved more and more legislation into regulation. What's particularly offensive about this piece of legislation, such as totalitarian regimes are prone to do, is the Orwellian concept that in controlling the past, you could therefore control the future. If the thing is done right, then it should be transparent, it should be accountable, and it should be open to discussion and debate, not hidden behind cabinet doors under the auspices of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

It worries me when I see a continuing trend with this government, a type of nostalgic desire to go back in time: the human rights act, that we discussed on Monday and Tuesday, going back in time, recognizing the authority of parents, which has never actually been lost, this desire to go back to potentially a time when women and children were considered a chattel. How far back do we go?

This is supposed to be a progressive piece of legislation which is going to bring economic harmony and labour mobility between the two provinces, yet there seems to be sufficient fear, uncharacteristic fear from this government that they need to have a delete clause. This government that is so keen, you know: don't apply the brakes

when it comes to oil sands development; full speed; ride that roller coaster right to the end. To use the western analogy, ride the horse into the ground.

4:20

This desire to go forward, on one hand, and then with a bungee cord be pulled back into reality and need to go back behind closed doors to correct the original mistakes, this whiplashing effect that I've talked about before in this House, is very disconcerting for Albertans who are trying to figure out whether this government has a road map, whether it has a direction, whether there's a plan. And, of course, when the plan, if there is one, is locked in a cabinet door somewhere in regulation which at the whim of the cabinet can be changed, then it's pretty hard, as the Member for Lethbridge-East pointed out, to know what the rules are when they're made up as the player goes along.

[Dr. Brown in the chair]

As we've debated, the TILMA bill has potential. But not being able to have the opportunity as a House, as elected representatives of the people to make whatever adjustments or corrections but to leave it solely to the wisdom of the cabinet, that sometimes seems like an oxymoron. We have some very capable cabinet ministers, ones that, you know, in good times might deserve bonuses or merit pay. But the idea of Albertans surrendering their democratic rights to the collective, selective wisdom of 23 cabinet ministers is a little bit frightening. The idea of, you know, in cabinet we trust – maybe we should establish our own Alberta currency to reflect these concerns.

Retroactivity is a concern. The idea that this government can basically go back in the snow and sweep the traces of where it was intending to go, wake up the next morning and there's no footprints and there's no path and Albertans haven't, as I say, a clue as to the direction the government is taking, is extremely disconcerting.

Individuals like I believe it's Duff Conacher of Democracy Watch must lose sleep over every successive attempt this government makes to take things out of legislation and hide them in regulation. That's a type of arrogance that, again, is only found in, you know, the divine right of kings or the divine rule of kings, this notion that we know best. I mean, I used to enjoy the show *Father Knows Best* back in the '50s, but I don't want to go back to the '50s. I want to be part of a progressive province that looks ahead rather than just driving along in the rearview mirror.

This government has to get with the program. It has to decide where it's going. It has to develop a map that other Albertans can follow. It has to have a set of tenets that are written down whereby we know where we're going. This business of "Trust us," given the recessionary times we find ourselves in, just doesn't cut it. For this bill to go forward, we must at least take out section 5, as the amendment recommends, or we as a democracy surrender all of our authority to the government. I'm not prepared to do that, nor are my constituents.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise in support of this amendment to delete section 5. I believe that this bill and particularly section 5 is an actual all-out assault on the powers of this Legislature and it is an attempt to usurp the powers vested in a democratically elected body. It is an assault on hundreds of years of constitutional tradition, and it ought to be defeated. By

passing this amendment, which is identical to one that the NDP opposition had prepared, we can take out this particularly irksome assault on our democratic traditions. I just want to say with respect to this amendment and this particular section of Bill 18 that section 5 gives legislative powers to the cabinet of Alberta. It is a very dangerous precedent, and it's not one that this Legislature ought to permit.

There have been attempts to do this and examples of this in Canadian parliamentary history in the past. I would like to read some quotes from the Ontario Supreme Court in a case entitled Ontario Public School Boards' Association versus Attorney General of Ontario in 1997. It is interesting. The court characterizes such a provision as we were discussing today as reversing the usual rule that "legislative power is vested in the democratically elected Legislative Assembly to make laws after full public debate," not in the executive of a particular political administration. It went on to characterize such a power in the following way:

This breathtaking power, to amend by regulation the very statute which authorizes the regulation, is known to legal historians as a "King Henry VIII" clause because that monarch gave himself power to legislate by proclamation, a power associated since the 16th century with executive autocracy

It describes such powers as

constitutionally suspect because it confers upon the government the unprotected authority to pull itself up by its own legal bootstraps and override arbitrarily, with no further advice from the Legislative Assembly, and no right to be heard by those who may be adversely affected by the change, the very legislative instrument from which the government derives its original authority.

Mr. Chairman, this goes on to say:

It is one thing to confer this extraordinary power if it is actually needed for some urgent and immediate action to protect an explicitly identified public interest. It is quite another thing to hand it out with the daily rations of government power, unlimited as to any explicit legal purpose for which it may be exercised.

I want to be very, very clear that there is no outstanding reason, urgency which compels the government to act without the Legislature to amend pieces of legislation which may come into conflict with the terms of TILMA. In fact, to put an agreement, a negotiated contract as it were, between provinces above the Legislature and above legislation itself is something that I think flies in the face of our democratic traditions.

Mr. Chairman, I want to read some quotes from a book, and I want to start by saying that I am in no way attempting to associate this government and what it's doing with the regime in Hitler's Germany in 1930. This I want to emphasize and underline. I don't want members opposite to be coming to the conclusion that I'm attempting to equate what the government is doing or this government in general with that. But this is a cautionary tale. This is the tale of how Hitler came to power in Germany. He came to power legally. He came to power through a mechanism which is somewhat similar – well, I would go further; I would say it is similar to the proposal that we have before us.

4:30

This is obviously an extreme example. I'm not suggesting that this is where this government wants to take us. But the principle, I think, needs to be illustrated, so I'm going to read some sections from William Shirer's book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, which I just got from the library downstairs. It says:

The plan was deceptively simple and had the advantage of cloaking the seizure of absolute power in legality. The Reichstag which was the German parliament,

would be asked to pass an "enabling act" conferring on Hitler's cabinet exclusive legislative powers for four years. Put even more simply, the German Parliament would be requested to turn over its constitutional functions to Hitler and take a long vacation.



The question was:

“How could they fail . . .

This is the Reichstag.

. . . to dismiss the apprehension with which they had begun to view the excesses and abuses of his party? Could they now hesitate to grant him their entire confidence, to meet all his requests, to concede the full powers he claimed?”

The answer was given two days later, on March 23, in the Kroll Opera House in Berlin, where the Reichstag convened. Before the house was the so-called Enabling Act – the “Law for Removing the Distress of People and Reich . . .” as it was officially called. Its five brief paragraphs took the power of legislation, including control of the Reich budget, approval of treaties with foreign states and the initiating of constitutional amendments, away from Parliament and handed it over to the Reich cabinet for a period of four years. Moreover, the act stipulated that the laws enacted by the cabinet were to be drafted by the Chancellor and “might deviate from the constitution.” No laws were to “affect the position of the Reichstag” – surely the cruelest joke of all – and the powers of the President remained “undisturbed.”

Hitler reiterated these last two points in a speech of unexpected restraint to the deputies assembled in the ornate opera house, which had long specialized in the lighter operatic works and whose aisles were now lined with brown-shirted storm troopers, whose scarred bully faces indicated that no nonsense would be tolerated from the representatives of the people.

The government [Hitler promised] will make use of these powers only in so far as they are essential for carrying out vitally necessary measures. Neither the existence of the Reichstag nor that of the Reichsrat is menaced. The position and rights of the President remain unaltered . . . The separate existence of the federal states will not be done away with. The rights of the churches will not be diminished and their relationship to the State will not be modified. The number of cases in which an internal necessity exists for having recourse to such a law is in itself a limited one.

The fiery Nazi leader sounded quite moderate and almost modest; it was too early in the life of the Third Reich for even the opposition members to know full well the value of Hitler’s promises. Yet one of them, Otto Wells, leader of the Social Democrats, a dozen of whose deputies had been “detained” by the police, rose – amid the roar of the storm troopers outside yelling, “Full powers, or else!” – to defy the would-be dictator. Speaking quietly and with great dignity, Wells declared that the government might strip the Socialists of their power but it could never strip them of their honour.

We German Social Democrats pledge ourselves solemnly in this historic hour to the principles of humanity and justice, of freedom and socialism. No enabling act can give you the power to destroy ideas which are eternal and indestructible.

Furious, Hitler jumped to his feet, and now the assembly received a real taste of the man.

You come late, but yet you come! [he shouted] . . . You are no longer needed . . . The star of Germany will rise and yours will sink. Your death knell has sounded . . . I do not want your votes. Germany will be free, but not through you! [Stormy applause.]

The Social Democrats, who bore a heavy responsibility for the weakening of the Republic, would at least stick to their principles and go down – this one time – defiantly. But not the Center Party, which once had successfully defied the Iron Chancellor in the Kulturkampf. Monsignor Kaas, the party leader, had demanded a written promise from Hitler that he would respect the President’s power of veto. But though promised before the voting, it was never given. Nevertheless the Center leader rose to announce that his party would vote for the bill. Bruening remained silent. The vote was soon taken: 441 for, and 84 (all Social Democrats) against. The

Nazi deputies sprang to their feet shouting and stamping deliriously and then, joined by the storm troopers, burst into the Horst Wessel song, which soon would take its place alongside “Deutschland ueber Alles” as one of the two national anthems:

Raise high the flags! Stand on rank together.

Storm troopers march with steady, quiet tread . . .

Thus was parliamentary democracy finally interred in Germany.

Mr. Chairman, again, I don’t think that that’s what’s happening here, but it is the mechanism that was used to take away parliamentary power. Democratically elected people lost their authority, lost their ability to make laws by delegating that power themselves to the cabinet in that case. The results, I think, I don’t have to talk about here. I don’t think, quite apart from TILMA or any other policy of the government, that this Legislature should be engaged in the process of delegating its legislative authority to the cabinet. I don’t care what the issue is; it is wrong. It is wrong for the government to ask us to do that, and we need to send a very clear message to them that we will not permit this abrogation of democratic principles that the people of Alberta have supported for over 100 years.

Mr. Chairman, I urge all members from all parties to look at this issue not as a question of TILMA or of any policy of the government but a question of the rights of the Assembly versus the rights of the government and urge you to support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Yes. On the amendment, Mr. Chairman, I’ve been listening to the debate. I’ve thought that a number of good points have been made. I think it’s important just for me for the record to repeat the intent of the amendment, which is to strike out section 5 of this bill.

The biggest reason there’s so much concern around section 5 is that it gives cabinet, the Lieutenant Governor in Council, two extraordinary powers at least. One is to go back in time and change things retroactively. Section 7(3) says:

A regulation made under subsection (1) may be made retroactive to a date not earlier than April 1, 2007, and if made retroactive

- (a) is deemed to have come into force on the date specified in the regulation, and
- (b) is retroactive to the extent necessary to give it force and effect on the date specified in the regulation.

So the first concern I have is that somehow this is allowing cabinet to go back in time and change the rules from up to two years ago. That’s wrong. It’s illogical. It’s devious. It’s dishonest. It’s constitutionally dubious as well.

The other main concern I have with this bill and the reason I’m supporting this amendment is that this continues the process that is so well under way here of the cabinet quietly overthrowing this Legislature. I think the reaction to the debate here confirms that that overthrow has largely happened, because while we are here debating a significant piece of legislation which could very well end up in the Supreme Court of Canada, barely a single government member of this Assembly is paying any attention.

The reason for that is that this Legislature is no more than a rubber stamp. The members of this Assembly, presumably, are coached to ignore the debate or are urged not to participate even though they are going to stand here and vote on a bill that is very possibly going to be challenged in the Supreme Court and overthrown. I think that we have developed a culture of casual disregard for the activities of this Legislature, and there are no greater offenders of that than the members sitting on the government side. Certainly, I can see that right now.

4:40

Those are the two key things, Mr. Chairman: a cabinet giving itself the ability to go back and rewrite history and to go in and change the law as passed by this Assembly. That's why I think this amendment is needed so badly.

I think we have to approach this from a couple of angles at least. One is precedent, and a number of colleagues in the opposition caucuses have spoken to this. This is a dangerous precedent, and it's a precedent that's completely unjustified, as the Member for Edmonton-Centre has said repeatedly. This is a trade bill. This is a largely administrative bill. Why do we have to give such draconian authority, such remarkable and potentially arbitrary power, to the cabinet for some bill like this? How is this justified?

Clearly, we're not going to get an answer to that from any of the government members because they've allowed themselves to be reduced to a rubber stamp. But not one of them seems concerned, Mr. Chairman, that this bill is going to get pushed through. I would like to hear somebody from the government benches give some justification for why we need these extraordinary powers for TILMA. Sad to say, I don't expect to get one.

We need to ask ourselves: where could this lead as a precedent? What are the dangers of this precedent? What happens if this gets accepted and in the future it's cited as an example for another bill that allows a different cabinet under different circumstances to go back in time and change the rules or to elevate itself above the Assembly? The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – I don't always get that in the right order – you know, drew an example from history. It's a dramatic example, but we need to remember those kinds of lessons. What seemed like an innocent or an acceptable compromise at the time, some 79 years ago in Berlin, turned out to be an important stepping stone towards a global catastrophe.

As the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood indicated, nobody's forecasting a global catastrophe here, but these precedents are important, and I don't think it takes any great imagination to imagine a cabinet in the future wanting to go back in time and amend health legislation as if the rules had been different two years before their meeting or a cabinet in the future wanting to simply rewrite a piece of legislation that's inconvenient for some reason and citing this particular bill as a precedent. "Well, they did it under TILMA, so we can do it now to rewrite something else," or "We can do it now to go back and try to change history." I think those are very, very dangerous precedents. There are any number of possibilities for that.

I just wish I could hear some explanation from the government of why this is necessary. We have seen this government from time to time proceed with legislation that was unconstitutional. We've seen that with the insurance industry. Ultimately the Supreme Court ruled against the government, and the government has so far tended to ignore the Supreme Court. We've also seen that in the issue of farm worker safety, where the Alberta government, this government, explicitly forbids paid farm workers from organizing into labour unions. They explicitly single out one particular segment of society and impair their right of association. That issue has gone to the Supreme Court of Canada, and it has been ruled unconstitutional, yet this government continues to ignore that. Those things will come back to haunt them.

This government damages its own credibility, it damages the rule of law, it damages the authority of the courts by routinely doing this sort of thing, and I think they're going to do it again here, Mr. Chairman. This is a bill, as has been said, that is constitutionally suspect.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask maybe the President of the Treasury Board or one of the sponsors of the bill, one of the cabinet ministers

here today: can you give us some justification for this? Will you engage in this debate, or are every single one of you silenced by some pressure from somewhere? Are every one of you going to stay silent while we pass a piece of legislation that goes back in time and gives your cabinet the authority to rewrite history? I'm looking for a gesture from one of you. Justify the bill, engage in the debate, stand up. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, stand up and justify why this bill is necessary.

**Mr. Marz:** You wouldn't want my gesture.

**Dr. Taft:** He says that I wouldn't want his gesture. I'd like some gesture here. Anybody.

Okay. Well, let it be noted for the record that of the many government members here not a single one attempted to justify this provision. I think that's shameful, but I think it exactly confirms the reason that we're opposed to this. We are steadily watching this Assembly be overthrown by cabinet, and the behaviour of the members opposite confirms that that process is already well under way.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I'll take my seat. Perhaps one of the members over in the corner, the Member for Rocky Mountain House or the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, wants to engage in this discussion. Justify it.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think the silence speaks volumes.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I didn't exactly intend to get up now and follow my hon. colleague the Member for Edmonton-Riverview although I didn't want things to grind to a complete halt here. When I saw no members from the government side of the House jumping up to engage the member in debate, I thought I would get up and keep the debate going.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, they are not on the government side getting up to talk to you to justify their stand on this bill, to justify section 5, to justify why they undoubtedly are going to vote against the amendment put forward by the Member for Lethbridge-East because they don't feel that they have to justify themselves to you. A government that would feel that it had to justify itself to you on a point such as this would not be bringing forward a point such as this. A government that felt that it was accountable to the people, a government that felt that it was a responsible government in the definition of the words "responsible government" would be on its feet, but it would be on its feet to argue something entirely different than this because the legislation that we see in front of us right now, hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and all other hon. members assembled in this House right now, would not contain a section like section 5.

4:50

Now, this sort of thing, this sort of section, this sort of attempt to get the trains to run on time if we had any trains in this province, this attempt to bring in administrative convenience – I can hardly use the word "efficiency" given my comments about the lack of efficiency of this government in its budgeting process a little earlier this afternoon – this attempt to bring in this administrative convenience, to put that ahead of the public interest or the rule of law can only be done and is only ever done by a government so full of itself, so consumed by its own arrogance that it's not a matter of caring about what the public thinks or what's in the public interest or ceasing to care about what's in the public interest; it's not even on their radar.

You know, I've been sitting here this afternoon, as I was, I guess, yesterday, when we first started committee debate on Bill 18, listening to the exchange back and forth between members of the

second party and members of the third party, largely, and in preparation for this debate reviewing this afternoon the *Hansard* from yesterday as we were debating Bill 18, and I can't help but think back to my school days, my fairly young school days in Ontario.

**Mr. Mason:** You remember that far back?

**Mr. Taylor:** I do remember that far back because it helps to remember history to keep from repeating the mistakes of history.

I remember I would think it would be in around grade 5 or grade 6, if I remember the Ontario school curriculum back then, that we learned about the government and governance of Upper Canada and the Family Compact and the brave, initially failed rebellions of William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis-Joseph Papineau in Lower Canada at the same time, a couple of backwater, bush-league, Canadian-style rebellions, hardly on the scale and scope of the way the Americans would have done it up, you know, the way they did do it up in 1776. It was a kinder, gentler, more polite and, as it seemed at the time, less effective rebellion, in fact, without which we wouldn't even have this country that we call Canada today, nor would we be sitting here, pointlessly it seems sometimes, nor would we be sitting here in this Legislature today, nor would our counterparts in the Ontario Legislature or the Quebec Assembly or the Parliament of Canada because that rebellion gave rise to a royal commission of inquiry, the Durham report, which began the process that ultimately, 30 years later, culminated in Confederation and in the process brought the people of Canada – the people of Canada then and the people yet to come, all of us – responsible government, representation by population, one person, one vote. It hasn't always worked as effectively in practice as it does on paper. It hasn't always been perfect, but it's been better than any alternative.

The reason why that rebellion happened, Mr. Chair, in the first place was because there was not responsible government in Upper Canada at the time, and there was not any interest by the ruling classes in responsible government in Upper Canada. In fact, there was interest only in a whole bunch of mutual back-scratching and featherbedding. The aristocracy, the British colonial governor, and the executive made sure that they looked after themselves and that they looked after one another, and the people of Upper Canada and the people of Lower Canada could go hang, for all they cared.

We can go farther back than that. I mean, the whole history, Mr. Chairman, of parliamentary democracy is a history ripe with examples of the people struggling for equality, struggling to have their say, struggling against royals and monarchical despots and corrupt nobles and evil robber barons who wanted to keep the peasants down because you can't be rich if there aren't poor people; you can't be upper-class if there aren't lower-class people; you can't lord it over your equals. Those in the underclasses spent – what's it been now? – almost 900 years fighting back and wresting, piece by piece, little bits of power away from the ruling classes so that the people could rule themselves.

Our shining example of that in Canada was William Lyon Mackenzie and the rebellion of 1837. It didn't go anywhere. Mackenzie got his sorry butt jammed in jail for a while. Somebody got hanged if I remember correctly. But, you know, it started what was then an unstoppable force here in Canada, and it gave us our country, it gave us our rule of law, it gave us our government, it gave us our freedom, and it gave us our rights as individuals to rule. Maybe we as people have gotten a little soft, a little complacent, a little used to having it so good. I don't know. Or maybe there are just evil people who seek to take our rights and our powers from us.

This is an evil piece of legislation. This is an evil, evil section. This is an absolutely unnecessary, unrequired, unjustifiable section in this bill. There is no justification even if you are prepared to

accept that this or any other government was so grossly incompetent that they could not enter into a free trade and labour mobility agreement with the next-door province and keep themselves from being fined repeatedly for the same offence. You know, there's just no justification for this kind of naked power grab. I don't condone it. I personally don't understand it.

I don't know that there are any individuals in the government or any individuals propping them up in the backbenches, doing their trained seal approach and putting their hands up and saying "aye" when the government whip tells them to – I don't know that there are any people over there who are inherently evil or inherently corrupt or inherently bad people. But, you know, persons can be pretty spectacular, and people together can sometimes be pretty dastardly. It seems to me that when you get this bunch of persons together in a group, they lose sight of what they're supposed to be there for, which is not for the people of Alberta to serve them. It's the other way around. The job of every elected representative in this House – Liberal, New Democrat, Conservative; yes, even Conservative – is to serve the people of Alberta.

This legislation cannot, does not, will not serve the people of Alberta so long as section 5 remains in there, and that's why I will be supporting amendment A2.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, do you wish to speak on this amendment?

**Mr. Chase:** I've spoken. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5:00

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any further speakers on the amendment?

Call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:01 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

For the motion:

Chase	Mason	Taft
Hehr	Pastoor	Taylor

Against the motion:

Allred	Hayden	Redford
Amery	Horne	Renner
Bhullar	Horner	Sandhu
Brown	Jacobs	Snelgrove
Calahasen	Klimchuk	Stevens
Campbell	Lindsay	VanderBurg
Denis	Lund	Weadick
Doerksen	Marz	Woo-Paw
Evans	McFarland	Xiao
Goudreau	Ouellette	Zwozdesky
Hancock		

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are now back on Bill 18. The hon. leader of the third party on Bill 18.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, on Bill 18. I just want to indicate to the House that I have an amendment, which I will distribute to the table and to the other hon. members of the Assembly. If you'll just let me know when you're ready, I will read it into the record.

**The Chair:** This amendment is now known as A3. The hon. leader of the third party on A3.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to move an amendment to Bill 18, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona I will move that Bill 18, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, be amended in section 2 by striking out subsection (7) and substituting the following: "(7) Section 293.4 is repealed."

**The Chair:** Hon. member, please go ahead.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This amendment removes a section of the respective act that was added by the government's 2008 TILMA implementation bill. These clauses apply to the portions of the bill that deal with extraprovincial bodies. I just want to indicate that this amendment is, in my view, a necessary one.

We've talked for some time about Bill 18 and its general clauses. We've had the debate on section 5. But I just want to indicate that the current bill states under (7) that section 293.4 is repealed and the following is substituted:

Regulation prevails

293.4 Where there is a conflict or inconsistency between a provision of a regulation made under section 293.3 and a provision of this Act or a provision of a regulation made under another section of this Act, the provision of the regulation made under section 293.3 prevails to the extent of the conflict or inconsistency.

Mr. Chairman, here we have again the same sort of question that we just debated under section 5, and it says – and I just want to go over this again – that where there is a conflict or inconsistency between a provision made under section 293.3, then the provision of the regulation “prevails to the extent of the conflict or inconsistency.” I just want to indicate that in lots of ways we're on dangerous ground. I think that we ought to keep in mind that these very broad powers of what applies and what doesn't apply can lead to unintended consequences and something that I think we ought to be very careful about.

5:20

Mr. Chairman, the concern that we have is that TILMA as it stands and with these various parts overriding other bills is dangerous. I know that the whole question of TILMA has been a contentious one from the beginning. I think the assumption on the part of the government is that there are very many aspects of restrictions and constraints on interprovincial trade that are holding back our economy, holding back the economy of British Columbia as well, and perhaps holding back Saskatchewan because the new right-wing government of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Party, formed by some right-wing elements of the former Saskatchewan Liberal Party and the Conservatives in Saskatchewan that managed to stay out of jail, has now taken the government there.

I just wanted to indicate that I don't think that there is a huge

problem with limitations and constraints on interprovincial trade. I hate to say it, but the government through its use of power of regulation overriding legislation and giving primacy to this bill over other bills is using a sledgehammer to swat a fly. You know, it's one of the things that I have kind of puzzled about. Why would they go to the extent of eroding the legislative power of this Assembly, giving legislative authority to the cabinet, which can meet behind closed doors and make political decisions without any public discussion, in order to make TILMA work? I don't think that TILMA accomplishes anything like what the government thinks it does.

As I was saying in the House the other day, I think that the government looks at Ronald Reagan with stars in their eyes. I see some hon. members, you know, nodding and grinning; Ronald Reagan is their hero. He and Brian Mulroney – oh, I don't see as many people nodding and smiling. Nevertheless, they created the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States, an appalling loss of sovereignty for our country. The Conservatives here look on that as a great accomplishment, sweeping away trade barriers and all of those great things that they believe in. Of course, then it was extended to Mexico and became the North American free trade agreement.

I think that there's a bunch of wannabes here, Conservatives that look up to Ronald Reagan. Maybe they're a little embarrassed about Brian Mulroney. Even so . . .

**An Hon. Member:** George W. Bush.

**Mr. Mason:** George W. Bush? Maybe. I don't know.

They want to emulate them. They want to have their own free trade agreement. Even though it doesn't make very much difference, they as good Conservatives want to do that because that's the kind of thing that good Conservatives do. They pass these laws that are extraterritorial, that supercede the powers of Legislatures and Congresses, and they open up the world for their idea of economic progress.

I just think that, on balance, Mr. Chairman, we ought to pass this amendment. If we're going to pass this bill and we're going to continue down the road of TILMA, then I think this amendment makes a great deal of sense. I know that TILMA is very important to the government, and they like to point to it as an accomplishment, but TILMA is going to go up and down. We're going to add Saskatchewan because a conservative party was elected in Saskatchewan, so now they want to join in. But at the next election coming up very soon in British Columbia, there's a very good chance that the NDP may be elected at the expense of the Liberal government, which is really a conservative government. If that's the case, then TILMA's going to shrink again. It'll just be pushed a little bit to the east. It'll be Alberta and Saskatchewan. [interjection]

You know there's always the possibility that the Conservatives could come to power in Manitoba, although I don't think that's too likely given that Premier Doer is the most popular Premier in all of Canada and runs a very balanced and effective government. So that's not likely to happen. I can tell you one thing, Mr. Chairman. It's inevitable that the NDP will get back into power at some point in Saskatchewan, and then TILMA is going to shrink again.

You know, is it really worth it, you guys on the other side? Is it really worth it to push so hard and be so excited about this trade bill? It's just going to go up and down like a yo-yo. One province will be in for a while, and then they're going to be out again. In lots of ways I just think that it's a bit futile. Ultimately, the main effect that this has is to prohibit local purchasing requirements by local authorities: school boards or hospital boards or municipalities. I

don't think that's in the best interests of the people because it means that small business gets run out of business by big business. That's why Conservatives like things like TILMA, and that's why New Democrats don't. It's as simple as that.

All I can say is that this agreement has no real future in Canada because it's just simply going to be opposed by New Democratic governments. One would hope that from time to time, if there was a progressive Liberal government, they would oppose it as well. So it's going to go swinging back and forth like a pendulum and not make much difference.

I would just urge my colleagues to support the amendment because I think it takes out some of the more irritating portions of the bill. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Hayden:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, I'd move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee now rise and report progress on Bill 18, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 18. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

5:30                    **Government Bills and Orders**  
    **Third Reading**  
    **Bill 21**  
    **Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2009**  
    *(continued)*

[Adjourned debate March 18: Mr. Hancock]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Seeing no other members who wish to speak on the bill, the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

**Bill 22**  
    **Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2009**  
    *(continued)*

[Adjourned debate March 18: Mr. Hancock]

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I've learned by the speed at which Bill 21 went through into third that I need to be jumping up a whole lot faster.

Comparing Bill 22 to 21 is somewhat difficult in that 21 is absolutely offensive. For years this government has gone over budget between \$1 billion and \$2 billion, but I wasn't fast enough on my feet, so I'll talk about the interim bill, Bill 22.

Bill 22 doesn't have nearly the negatives associated with it although, as numerous members have pointed out, had the government released its yearly budget in a timely manner, Bill 22 basically would have been unnecessary. But seeing as the government dragged its feet hoping for some type of global recessional miracle that would shine its light on Alberta and magically the price of oil and gas would return to \$147 a barrel and a gigajoule of gas would be back in the area of \$14 – that didn't happen.

I have a degree of sympathy, actually, with regard to Bill 22 in that we have to have some kind of obvious carry-over while we anxiously anticipate the passing or at least the discussion of the budget. It's certainly far from a cakewalk passing.

I do appreciate the fact that as the government, forces external have had an effect on Alberta's economy, and I am aware that a small portion of the \$10 billion is going to keep democracy working. In fact, it's paying our Legislative Assembly Office bills; it's paying our constituency office bills.

I'm sure a number of members in this House, particularly urban members, have gotten caught in a circumstance where even though the economy is going down and eventually real estate prices and lease agreements will probably follow suit, we basically, a large number of us, had to sign documents for lease agreements. I doubt very much that anyone in an urban setting found themselves in a situation where the landlord was saying: please stay, and I'll reduce your monthly lease. Likewise, the cost of supplies has to carry over from month to month. I understand the need for, as individuals have said before, keeping the lights on and the fans running, the photocopiers operating.

But I would like to think that given what control we do have within the province, we would get to the point where the interim financing would be less and less necessary, and part of the solution for reducing our dependency on temporary measures such as interim financing is having a more stable economic base.

We've been for far too many years dependent on oil and gas, whether we've moved from conventional to new types of opportunities within the oil sands or another form that is, well, in my mind, equally controversial, coal-bed methane. The reality is that we're still resource dependent. We haven't got past the point where finished products bring in more money than the raw product. Within the interim budget in that short period of time how many million dollars' worth of bitumen are being shipped elsewhere? When we come to our next interim budget, how many more barrels of bitumen will have been processed when new pipelines have been operated?

In order to get our interim budget correct or to eliminate our interim budgets, we need to be diversifying our economy. Within that \$10 million I would have been very pleased to see, for example, residences, infrastructure for postsecondary campuses taking place. The minister of advanced education rightly pointed out that the University of Calgary is the recent lottery winner in terms of 600 new spaces, but as I pointed out, that only accounts for accommodating 7.4 per cent of University of Calgary students.

One of the circumstances that I would have liked to have seen flagged in the interim budget was the government's indication, at least, that they were going to work together with their federal counterparts and that maybe they had in the funding of the interim financing struck a committee, at least, that was going to work with

the federal counterpart to either eliminate the parental portion of the tuition fee, that compromises students, or potentially increase the amount students could borrow without that amount being affected by their parents' combined incomes, which a number of students have no access to anyway as they've left the house. In the interim financing I would have liked to have seen, even if it was only a temporary commitment, some type of direction indicating that school infrastructure was going to be acknowledged as in bad need of repair.

I realize that the interim budget is just a carry-over, but whether it's the supplementary supply budget or whether it's the interim budget, I would have really appreciated having some kind of a hint as to the direction we'll be going on April 7. Words like, you know, "wait and see" or "we're monitoring the situation," unfortunately, do not give myself or a number of Albertans comfort. Within the interim budget there is no possible way that we could have eliminated the recessionary trends. We couldn't have magically by some stimulus package within this interim budget restored the opportunities for the 30,000 Albertans that have lost their jobs over the last two months, but within the interim budget we could have struck committees. We could have financed committees to look at how it is that we're going to get those jobs back for the 30,000 Albertans; how we're through diversifying our economy going to create greater stability; how potentially, while these 30,000 people are out of work, we could have set up retraining courses at our numerous colleges and institutes to redirect people in areas where they would have sustainable jobs.

5:40

A number of people, the first ones to lose their jobs, that aren't accounted for in the interim budget are the drillers. Some people have been fortunate enough to find some drilling possibilities in B.C. Others have found some possibilities in Saskatchewan. But in speaking with a driller this past weekend in Calgary, they're very concerned about the lack of ongoing direction and the whole fact that we can't approach it just within this interim budget.

We've got to realize that our conventional oil and gas supplies are limited. With luck, when we get into carbon sequestration, we may be able to pump out those last few barrels of conventional oil and gas, but we don't see within this interim budget, again, any kind of direction from this government as to how they're going to turn the possibility of sequestration into an economic driver. Within the interim budget – and, again, I realize it's limited – some type of flagging would have been nice with regard to reclamation. You know, we get frustrated, and we get after the government for monitoring and for: let's establish a committee. But at least when a committee is designated, there is some hope that that committee is going to provide recommendations.

I had an opportunity this past Friday in Calgary to talk to the new head of ISEEE, the Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy, and he made some very interesting comments about new technology that the U of C is currently working on that could potentially store energy: solar energy, heat energy. He talked about the possibility with wind turbines, some type of turning that power into a compressed air circumstance and then using that compressed air, as they further develop the technology, to drive the turbines to produce the energy, the thought that we're potentially on the edge of being able to store renewable energy in the form of solar or wind or different types of cogeneration. For example, at that same meeting of the University of Calgary senate there was talk about the new heating plant and the cogeneration possibilities and the fact that there would be less emissions both in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> and in terms of noise and how that was going to save millions and millions of

dollars. Even though it's an interim, I'm looking for any kind of glimmer of potential indication from this government that they're going to get behind innovation and technology funding as a way of diversifying our economy.

Also, in terms of university, we need to be looking at a well-rounded population. Yes, we need engineers. Yes, we need geologists. Yes, we need more doctors. Yes, we need more scientists. But it would be nice to see more emphasis, more stimulation provided to the arts and to the humanities and to social sciences.

You know, we're talking \$10 million in a budget that will be reduced, I'm sure, on April 7. This flagging of dealing with approaching a different type of economic driver in this province would have provided a tremendous amount of, well, hope, for lack of a better word. People are getting more and more glum as we get further into this recession, and they're looking to this government to demonstrate some initiative.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, but in accordance with Standing Order 64(5) at this time the chair is required to put the question to the House on every appropriation bill standing on the Order Paper for third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

**The Chair:** The chair shall now call the committee to order.

#### Bill 18 Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009 (continued)

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. You can fool me once but not twice. I'm standing and ready to debate and support this particular amendment. As we have noted before, this amendment is trying to remove the notion that somehow regulation trumps legislation. It's trying to remove the tyranny of the majority. It's trying to deal with the philosophy that might is right.

It was an interesting historical glimpse back in time that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood provided with his references to the power takeover in Germany. He made it very clear that he was not suggesting, nor am I, that this government is using tactics of a storm trooper nature. But this is one more bill in a long list of bills where democratic rights are eroded.

All members of the opposition supported Lorne Gibson, the Alberta Chief Electoral Officer, who was eventually fired for pointing out this government's failure to enshrine democratic rights. Lorne Gibson first made I think it was 186 recommendations. Unfortunately, this government decided that not one of them was sufficiently worth pursuing. I think that by the time Lorne was finally tossed out, he had come up with about 250 recommendations. Now, of the key recommendations a very minimal recommendation was the notion of a fixed election – a fixed election date, that is. It's very important that I have my terminology correct.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer has brought up numerous times in this House his concern about the government's failure to allow prosecution of 19 irregularities that occurred during the last

election. For a government that talks about transparency and accountability, this is extremely disconcerting.

5:50

Now, I don't expect that any time soon under the Conservative government I'm going to have somebody kick in my front door. I don't expect that within the realm of this Conservative government we're going to have an equivalent of a Kristallnacht. I don't expect that because I have voted Liberal, I am going to have to wear a red L on my jacket. Those were the extremes that people were subjected to during the Second World War. It's fairly safe to say that I don't expect that first they'll eliminate the intellectuals, as other governments have done. I would be sort of in the middle of the list of that. I would not have been one of the first to go, and I freely admit that. But during the Second World War there was a theme that came out.

**Mr. Denis:** That wasn't 1929.

**Mr. Chase:** No. It was actually 1939, you know. Yes, we've moved from Tennessee, and we're now finding ourselves in 1939 in Germany. We've hopped on the TILMA, trade, investment, and labour mobility, time machine.

I don't know to what extent this Legislature has the ability in terms of translation. I know that there is a preference to provide the translation. But a theme that was very significant, a theme song, a rallying cry, which I will spare you the singing of, during the rise of totalitarianism in Germany was this. [Remarks in German] I apologize for not being able to provide you an instant translation. It talked about freedom. It talked about standing up for democratic rights. It talked about not allowing, even in your darkest hour, your rights to be violated.

Maybe it seems that TILMA, you know, is not the Alberta trade measures act, but we are taking away democratic principles. This amendment from my colleague for Lethbridge-East is pointing this out, that when we rely on regulation by an individual or a small group of individuals at the expense of the democratic right of discussion and debate in the Legislature, then we have taken away the rights of individuals to be heard.

I have talked before about omnipotence, omniscience, but my firm belief – and I do consider myself a religious individual – is that that type of power is very much extraterrestrial, and giving that kind of power to either an individual in the form of a cabinet minister or to the cabinet themselves is a surrender of the right of freedom of speech, the right to put forward an idea that may be contrary.

I'm hoping that in debating this amendment, we will receive some type of response from the government in terms of the justification

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you again. It's 5:55, so the committee will rise and report progress on Bill 18.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 18. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report, does the Assembly concur?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

May I have a moment? We have very special guests of another hon. member here. I would like to call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay for the introduction.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, and thank you for the indulgence. This is a surprise visit. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this House two constituents from Calgary-Mackay who are related to me by blood. We have Miss Jadine Paw, who was born and raised in Calgary-Mackay and who is now attending the University of Calgary medical school, and Mr. Jason Paw, my son, who is currently living in Edmonton, working at the University hospital. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As is customary on Wednesdays, a lot of good progress made. That having been said and looking at the hour, I would move that we call it 6 p.m. and adjourn until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]







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