



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

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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.

Monday, April 20, 2009

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Let us pray. Renew us with Your strength. Focus us in our deliberations. Challenge us in our service to the people of this great province. Amen.

Hon. members, I am now going to invite Colleen Vogel of the Legislative Assembly Office of Alberta to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. I would invite all, those who are present in our galleries as well, to participate in the language of one's choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

**Mrs. Ady:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's such a privilege today to be able to stand before you and introduce a school that has made the trek from my constituency to the Legislature every year for the last eight years. It's the Trinity Christian school. They have with them today their teacher, Miss Cheryl Barnard, and 13 parents, who drove these kids up and shepherded them so that they could come and learn what happens in the Legislature. I'd ask if they would all rise and if we could give a warm welcome to this group.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today a group of people from the Rimbey elementary school. They're spending a few days learning about the workings of government at School at the Legislature. There are 24 students, two teachers, and seven parent helpers. I'd like to introduce to you the teachers, Mrs. Vanessa Howey and Mrs. Fiona Martel, and parent helpers Mrs. Connie Fonstad, Mrs. Emily Breton, Mrs. Kim Woodliffe, Mrs. Dana Franklin, Mrs. Rae Ann Rallison, Mrs. Tresa Lowe, and Mr. Dallas Mannix. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some hard-working staff members from my department's community spirit program. Program director Pam Boutilier is a familiar

face and friend to many in this Assembly. Joining her today are Erin Collins, Lynn Ziegler, Darlene Christopher, along with Tom Thackeray, the assistant deputy minister responsible for the community and voluntary services division. Missing is Julie MacLean, who couldn't be with us today. These individuals are the heart and soul behind the community spirit program, have worked hard day and night to ensure that over 1,496 organizations were recipients of some \$19 million.

Thank you, sir.

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a distinct pleasure today to introduce someone to you whom I have often called a hero, a friend, and a dad. My dad, Keith Griffiths, seated in your gallery, is the man that raised me and made me who I am, so he often gets credit for a lot of things I do, but he often gets a lot of blame for when I act like an idiot. On the balance, however, I think he's fairly proud of me. I'd ask him to rise in your gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of 15 fine people from Red Deer and surrounding area that are here today. I'll begin with my constituency assistant, Brenda Johnson, and her husband, Ken. If you could rise. They have brought along with them brothers, sisters-in-law, and friends. Also, a very special guest, Rustom Vazifdar, who is our Rotary International youth exchange student from Mumbai, India, is with us today. Joining this group are Don and Norma Bonham, Frank and Carol Bonham, Don and Ruby Johnson, June and Terry Rollinson, Don Coté, Al and Lorraine Coker, and a name you may recognize, Al Delmage, who formerly was the skip numerous times at the Canadian Brier, representing Northwest Territories-Yukon. Please join me in welcoming our guests from Red Deer.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you today and through you to all members of the House three dedicated individuals from the town of High Level. There's probably no community in Alberta that's as heavily impacted by the downturn in the forest industry as the town of High Level, yet despite those hardships we've got with us today some big believers in the future of that town. Could I introduce to you and all hon. members the acting mayor, Crystal McAteer, councillor Jerry Chomiak, and the chief administrative officer, Dean Krause. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and to all members today two guests, Reverend Bob Kimmerly and Isabel Golightly, who are here from Kirk United church in Edmonton. They are here to represent many Albertans who have signed a petition, that I will be presenting later, organized by the Reverend Syd Bell regarding seniors' issues. They want to witness me making that presentation. I would ask them to please rise. They're in the public gallery. Please give them a warm reception.

Thank you.

## Members' Statements

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

### Organ Donation

**Mr. Sandhu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to recognize organ donor week, which is April 19 to 26 this year. Organ donation has always been an important issue for me. That is why I introduced Motion 528, urging the government to require Albertans to make an election regarding organ donation on the back of their Alberta health card.

In the April 5 *Edmonton Journal* there was an article about organ and tissue donations. This article said that Canada has more than 4,000 people waiting for transplants; 600 of these people were in Alberta alone. Last year, sadly, 51 people died while on the waiting list for transplants at the University of Alberta. This article said that one donor could help as many as 80 people.

It is not difficult to become an organ donor. All you need to do is carry an organ donor card in your wallet. It is also very important to discuss your wishes with your family. Once we are no longer living, organ donation is one last chance to help people, to give people another chance at life or at living in a normal way. There are so many people who have died while waiting for transplants, and this does not have to be the case. I urge all members of this Assembly and, indeed, all Albertans to discuss organ donation with their family and to sign their health card and let others know of their decision and explain the benefit of this life-changing decision.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

1:40

### Equality and Human Rights

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on national Equality Day. I was invited by Erin Woods elementary school through the Dominion Institute's passage to Canada initiative to speak to the grades 4 to 6 students on April 17 on the subjects of immigration, discrimination, and racism. It was certainly encouraging to have educators taking proactive steps to introduce topics that many adults find difficult to discuss.

Each April 17 we celebrate Equality Day as a way to recognize the equality provisions, sections 15 and 28, that were signed into the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the historic activism of Canadian women. These provisions have been significant in the progress we as Canadians have made towards equality in our society. In our province it is the role of the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission to ensure that all persons are treated equally regardless of race, religious belief, gender, physical or mental disabilities, age, or other factors outlined in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, 94 per cent of Albertans feel that an environment free of discrimination is important to their overall quality of life in communities, and 88 per cent believe that human rights are well protected in Alberta. Budget 2009 announced that Alberta's human rights system would be receiving an additional \$1.7 million, an increase of 26 per cent, to protect human rights, promote fairness and access, and support the inclusion of all Albertans. This includes increasing awareness of Alberta's human rights legislation; resolving and adjudicating human rights complaints; and providing education, information, and consultative services that support human rights.

Equality Day recognizes the formal steps the Canadian government has taken to ensure that all of our rights are protected under law, but we also need our institutions and citizens from east to west,

north to south to have the capacity and share the commitment to be ambassadors of equality in our everyday lives.

Thank you.

### Calgary Civic Camp

**Mr. Hehr:** This Saturday along with 165 other Calgarians I attended the first Civic Camp, an event organized by Sustainable Calgary and the Better Calgary campaign. The initiative pulled together artists, small-business owners, urban planners, activists, municipal and provincial decision-makers, and partners in the nonprofit sector to brainstorm around the simple question: how do we build the kind of city we want for ourselves and our children?

Together we explored urban issues like improving and expanding public transportation, creating green and vibrant public spaces, and encouraging good governance in our city. It was an inspiring day, and like all participants I can say that I came away from Civic Camp with a renewed and energized sense of Calgary's huge potential as an urban community. Expect to hear a lot more from this core group of Civic Camp-ers in the days and weeks ahead.

This amazing event was made possible by a number of individuals committed to improving the quality of life of all Calgarians: Cheri Macauley, Bob McInnis, Byron Miller, Chris Turner, Noel Keough, David Winkler, Donna Zwicker, Nahed Nenshi, Peter Rishaug, Richard Parker, Bob Morrison, Natalia Zoldak, Dave Robertson, Annalise Van Ham, Allard Losier, Bridget Warner, Nancy Jacklin, J'Val Shuster, Sarah Kopjar, Randy Kopjar, Colleen Doylend, Sherrie Dutton, Rona Fluney, Don Cockerton, Patricia Merkel, Juliet Burgess, Tegan Forbes, Ashley Bristowe, Chris Johnston, Jennifer Devine, Neil Devine, Rich Rawlyk. I'd like to commend them all for starting this great initiative.

Thank you very much.

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

### Dr. Grant Gall

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Grant Gall. He passed away on Saturday, April 18, 2009, in Jamaica with his wife, Lori, at his side. He was 68 years young. Grant Gall not only left his mark in health care in Alberta; he made people's lives better around the world.

Born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Grant grew up on a farm just outside Acme, Alberta. He completed his medical degree from the University of Alberta in 1965, with subsequent internship and residency in Vancouver, Toronto, and Boston. Grant was a research investigator and physician in gastroenterology at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and later joined the university in 1979. He was a dedicated physician and an internationally renowned researcher.

In 1997 he was appointed dean of medicine after serving as associate dean of research and head of pediatrics. Dr. Gall's decade as dean was transformational for the medical school and the university. Under his strong leadership the Faculty of Medicine created the O'Brien Centre for the bachelor of health sciences program and established a Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Grant was also instrumental in the development of the new Alberta Children's hospital.

A passionate learner and traveller, Grant fostered international health programs in Laos, Chile, and the Philippines that have provided immeasurable health benefits for the people in those countries as well as life-changing experiences for U of C undergraduates, medical students, and faculty. He was inspirational to all he touched, and he touched so many.

Our hearts and prayers go out to his beloved wife of 49 years, Laurie, and the children and the grandchildren he loved. Alberta has lost a great public servant. He will be missed, and we thank him.

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

#### Plan for Parks

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was honoured to emcee a media conference this morning as our Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation unveiled Alberta's 10-year plan for parks. The event was held at one of the gems of our provincial parks system, Fish Creek provincial park. This urban park is much loved and often frequented by individuals and groups from Calgary-Lougheed as well as constituents from across the city and far beyond.

The plan for parks represents a milestone for the minister. After extensive consultation across Alberta, it delivers on her mandate from the Premier to develop a plan to ensure Alberta's parks and recreation areas remain protected yet accessible to Alberta's growing population. It balances conservation and recreation activities while illustrating the important role that our provincial parks play in meeting the environmental, economic, and social needs of Albertans. The plan for parks is aligned with the land-use framework as it shares the same desired outcomes and geographical regions. The plan also identifies the need to develop a clear process for Albertans to nominate new parks, a process that will ensure local communities and citizens play a key role in decisions about parks in their region.

Alberta's parks inspire people to discover, value, protect, and enjoy the natural world and the benefits it provides for current and future generations. Public input regarding future decisions will help to literally shape our province's landscape. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Albertans to read this plan and to act on these new opportunities to participate in and provide input on our invaluable parks system. For much more information Albertans can call 1.866.427.3582 or contact [ParkNews@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ParkNews@gov.ab.ca).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### National Oral Health Month

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you may know, April is Oral Health Month. This week in particular celebrates the many men and women across the country that work as dental hygienists. As of January 1, 2009, there were more than 2,400 dental hygienists registered at practice in Alberta. Their contribution to the continued health of Albertans is beyond measure.

Dental hygienists are highly trained professionals with considerable training and knowledge in the areas of clinical practice, decision-making, and critical thinking as well as in the assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of care provided to clients. Dental hygienists have been providing oral health services to Albertans through dental practices and community health settings since 1951 and have been self-regulated since 1990. Since October 31, 2006, dental hygienists have been regulated under the Health Professions Act.

The College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta, the CRDHA, is the professional body responsible for the registration and annual professional certification of all dental hygienists in Alberta. The CRDHA, through authority delegated by the government of Alberta, grants the registered dental hygienist designation and authorizes a dental hygienist to legally practise in Alberta. The CRDHA is governed by a council of eight elected registered dental

hygienists and three members of the public, appointed by the minister. The CRDHA ensures that dental hygienists have the educational qualifications and competence to perform and ensure that Albertans receive safe, high-quality dental hygiene care.

Thank you.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

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

#### Precision Drilling Corporation

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it was announced that AIMCo, which manages Alberta's public savings, has taken a 15 per cent stake in Precision Drilling. This deal is worth almost \$300 million. To the minister of finance: will the minister confirm to the Assembly that there was no contact between any cabinet member or government staff and AIMCo or Precision Drilling before close of business on Friday?

**Ms Evans:** I will confirm that, Mr. Speaker. AIMCo has been created deliberately as an arm's-length Crown corporation, unfettered by attention or influence by the political or the appointed part of our government. There was absolutely no contact with myself or with the deputy minister relative to this decision. The due diligence done by AIMCo and their staff relative to this is exactly a process that's approved by a very sophisticated board that believed that this type of investment was appropriate within the policy.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's necessary to manage the stakes so that Albertans get a proper return on their investment. It's also important to ensure that this is an investment and not a bailout of a debt-burdened company. Again to the minister: will AIMCo be taking a position on Precision Drilling's board?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, that is not something that has ever been even suggested to me. I would agree with the hon. member: the mission of AIMCo is to get the very best possible return within the boundaries of policy that this government has relative to the kinds of risks and liabilities and the type of reward that is sought. So they have done everything according to policy. They have not involved the politician. They have a very sophisticated form of due diligence and analysis, and there has been absolutely no suggestion by the CEO or the CFO, the financial officer, that they have any intention of being more involved in Precision Drilling than they currently are as an investor.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a difficulty here. The Alberta government manages the oil and gas resource in this province on behalf of Albertans, collecting royalties on development. The government is currently providing incentives for drilling companies by cutting royalties those companies pay. Now the government owns a large stake in one of those companies. To the minister: how will this government manage this conflict?

**Ms Evans:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again there is some suggestion by the opposition of conflict of interest, and there seems to be a lack of recognition of the arm's-length role and responsibility of AIMCo. AIMCo invests money not only on behalf of this government but on

behalf of the pension fund, some 70 billion dollars that they manage, roughly half of which is the total responsibility of the government, roughly half, in part, for the pension administration. We're proud of the work they do. To suggest that there's any wrongdoing in that would be to suggest also that in the Thames waterworks in the U.K. or Puget Sound in Washington state they were not qualified.

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

### Mental Health Services

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. In the Auditor General's October '08 report there were serious concerns raised about mental health services. The government's response in their 2009 fiscal plan was to recommend: "Over the next three years, the Department of Health and Wellness and AHS will identify and develop standards for mental health services." To the minister. The Auditor General clearly called for standards. Will the minister table any standards or evidence towards standards that have been created since this 2008 report?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is correct when he said that in our response to the Auditor General we indicated that we would be developing those standards over the next three years, and we intend to hold to that commitment.

**Dr. Swann:** I gather there has been no progress, then.

Again to the minister. By spending money wisely up front on social and health programs, long-term costs are deferred or eliminated. When will we see this minister set up and strengthen the community support services for mental health?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta has funded mental health significantly over the last number of years to the tune of some 600 million dollars annually. In addition to that, we've had a strong part in the safe communities initiative. I think the total dollars over a three-year period are in excess of a hundred million dollars for mental health and addictions. I guess I would just remind the hon. leader that one of the key parts of our action plan last year was to release a children's mental health strategy.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister be releasing a new provincial mental health plan considering the changes that have been introduced with Alberta Health Services and the elimination of the Mental Health Board?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's something that we would always be looking at, whether or not the plan, that was released several years ago, would need revision. If so, we'd certainly be open to that.

I think the important thing, however, is that we have put a lot of emphasis during the past year in the development of the children's mental health strategy. We believe very strongly that we need to identify at a young age those who have mental illnesses and put in place treatment programs for them so that they can grow up to be strong contributors to society.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

### All-terrain Vehicle Safety

**Mr. Chase:** Today we had the sad news of another tragic death of a child while using an ATV. For some years now we have been encouraging the government to take action on this issue. To the Minister of Transportation: when will the minister bring in helmet laws for children using ATVs?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have to say that that was a very, very horrible tragedy this weekend, and my heart goes out to the father. I can't imagine. That would be your worst nightmare, to find your own son in that position. That said, we don't have the information to even know if it was a helmet that created that problem or what actually happened there. But I will say that we try all the time to make sure that we have safe laws in Alberta. We've been working on helmet legislation, which I do think will be coming forward within the next year. I still tell people that they have to use common sense and to please supervise their children when they're on ATVs.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when will the minister introduce limits on the power of ATVs that children can operate?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, any manual you ever read for any one of those ATVs that you purchase – there are safety standards all along the fenders of most of these that come from the manufacturer. We have to take responsibility ourselves and for our children, and we have to do that within ourselves and train them on the safety features of these vehicles.

**Mr. Chase:** The government has taken a stance on seat belts. The government has taken a stance on bicycle helmets. To the same minister: when will there be mandatory licensing for all-terrain vehicles and their drivers?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we only have jurisdiction on Crown land and on public lands under the highway Traffic Safety Act. Under the highway Traffic Safety Act we try to look after all of that Crown land. On private land I don't have jurisdiction as the Minister of Transportation. I'm not so sure that all people, whether they vote for our party, which most of them do, or these other two really want us interfering on their private rights on their private land.

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

### Mental Health Services

*(continued)*

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's mental health system has been in crisis for decades, and a balanced approach, with more medical and housing services at the community level, would go a long way towards improving things. At least that's what a report commissioned by this government concluded over two years ago. Their own steering committee on mental health approved the report before it was turned into a state secret by this government. My question is for the minister of health. Why are you covering up this government's mental health failures, and why did your ministry hide this report from the public?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's probably no department that tables more reports in this Legislative Assembly than the Department of Health and Wellness. As a department you commission reports periodically, from time to time. Some of them you table; some of them you don't. They become advice to the department or the minister. The recommendations from these reports find their way into policy, and that's exactly what has happened here.

2:00

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in this report that the public shouldn't have seen.

In 2002 to 2003 over 2 and a quarter million doctors' visits in Alberta were for mental health issues, which represents nearly 40 per cent of general practitioner billings. Covering up this report and ignoring its findings costs our economy over \$5 billion a year, and this minister's inaction contributes to higher health care costs. To the minister: when will you admit that implementing the report would not only help thousands and thousands of people get better but could actually help control health care costs in our province?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll just repeat what I replied earlier in the House to the Leader of the Opposition, that this government has committed some 600 million dollars annually to mental health. We have been a strong participant in the safe communities initiative, where, again, over a three-year period some 100 million dollars is going towards new beds for treatment facilities. So I would suggest that this government has taken this issue very seriously and will continue to take it seriously.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the government might as well be pushing mentally ill people into the cracks of the system. They've known for decades that it's broken. They got a viable road map to fix it two years ago, but they buried it, and in October, when the Auditor General said the system was in trouble, they cut his funding. My question is to the minister of health. When will you stop ignoring this silent epidemic and hiding the truth from Albertans, that you're failing our people with mental illness and that you don't want the good advice that the . . .

**The Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the only people who are ignoring is the particular member here, who hasn't been listening to any of the answers that I've been providing.

You know, in the last year through the safe communities program we've opened up some 80 new residential beds, and in this particular budget, that was just introduced in this House a couple of weeks ago, there is some additional 42 million dollars allocated through our department through safe communities. We anticipate an equal number of beds that'll be opened. We treat this matter very seriously, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Plan for Parks

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation released Alberta's plan for parks, and I'd like to congratulate her on this achievement. Recently I've been reading articles that suggest specific percentages of land should be set aside for parks. My question to the minister:

does the plan for parks propose a set percentage of land for parks in Alberta?

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

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is right: we were able to announce the plan for parks. We've been in consultation for a long time, and I was very pleased to be able to bring forward a plan that I think balances conservation with the idea of people being able to enjoy or have access to those parks.

As to numbers, some were asking if we were putting formulas or specific percentages. We're not. We're going out to regional planning. We're going to be asking those communities and taking a look at it from that direction. Really, if you were to look at the parks in this province, 4 per cent of the land base is already protected under provincial parks. As well as the federal parks it's 13 per cent of the system, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question to the same minister: can the minister tell me how new parks will be created under this plan?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we're going out into these regional plans. There's an opportunity to nominate parks, and it's going to be done at a community level. The hon. member, of course, has a great example in her community, where we had all the various groups get together and sit down, even those that were opposed to activity. They came forward with a wonderful plan for the Eagle Point provincial park and the Blue Rapids provincial recreation area, a great example and one that we're going to use as a prototype as we go out into the community.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister. The land-use framework released at the end of last year mentioned the development of a plan for parks as a priority action. How does the plan for parks fit within the land-use framework?

**Mrs. Ady:** This is very important, Mr. Speaker, because the land-use framework is now divided into seven regions, and they're going out and they're using the watersheds of this province. We will be going out with the land-use framework with the park plan. We will look at those same regions. We are using the same criteria that they are using, and in the end we want to achieve the goal of sustainable, responsible land use in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

#### Federal Health Transfer Payments

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the government's latest PR spin to distract attention away from the crisis in health care and the embarrassing multibillion-dollar deficit is to blame Ottawa and the federal government for all its problems. This blame game always comes up when they know they're in trouble, and it is disingenuous and, quite frankly, a tired tactic. To the President of the Treasury Board: when will this government stop blaming Ottawa for its own fiscal mismanagement and take ownership of the fact that

after collecting multibillion dollars in resource revenue, they're now scrambling to get \$700 million from their federal cousins?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that what this government has done historically and will continue to do into the future is stand up for the rights of Albertans. When it comes to health care, I don't think anyone in Alberta is any less important than anyone who lives anywhere else in Canada. There may be other equations they want to use to equalize the wealth that we share as Canadians, but from strictly a point of health care I think all Canadians should be treated the same.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a historic moment when the President of the Treasury Board argues for the return of a program, the equalization of health transfers, that the Paul Martin Liberals suggested and the Harper Conservatives took away.

Since there has been quite a bit of revisionist history going on, does the President of the Treasury Board understand the fact that by demanding \$700 million of health transfers, this government is asking that their federal cousins follow through with the policy of their Liberal predecessors?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Like most Albertans, Mr. Speaker, we try on a daily basis to forget how wonderful our federal Liberal cousins were to us. We try daily. We're not arguing with our federal cousins. We've entered into a very constructive debate about how we're going to fund health care. If the hon. members don't think that's a responsible move, then they can say so. We're debating about funding health care on an equitable basis.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I can get the President of the Treasury Board to enter into a debate with Ross from Stony Plain, one of the people who has brought his questions to us because Albertans are clearly angry about this budget. Ross would like to know if the President of the Treasury Board understands the fact that if our unprecedented wealth had been properly managed over the last 20 years, we would be facing this economic downturn in much better shape than we are now.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, we have used the tremendous wealth that has come from our resources and other industries in Alberta to build a province that is virtually the envy of the world. I don't understand what they think is wrong with having world-class universities, world-class health facilities, an education system that leads the world, and people that are healthier, wealthier, and, thank goodness, wiser than most of them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

#### **Buffalo Housing First Program**

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have an excellent program in Red Deer for homeless people. The former Buffalo Hotel was renovated two years ago to rehouse homeless people and provide them with the right services to address their homelessness. Last year Housing and Urban Affairs provided \$465,000 in operating funding. My first question is for the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. Can the minister tell us if provincial funding will continue in the next fiscal year?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the Member for Red Deer-South has advocated for and supports this program, which began as a pilot project two years ago. It is a good program, hon. member. It's a program that's a public-private partnership. It's funded by all three levels of government. It aligns with our Housing First model. I can tell you that given the success of this program the member will be pleased to know that we are committed to providing a further \$584,000 for it to continue to operate this year.

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you. My second question is for the same minister. Can the minister explain the difference between the Buffalo Housing First program for the homeless and affordable housing?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, too, having served on the task force for the 10-year plan for Red Deer, housing is quite different for the homeless than affordable housing. Housing for the homeless is smaller in size, about 400 square feet, has single occupancy, and also is based on an individual's ability to pay whereas affordable housing is more modest in size and amenities, is standard in the community that it's located in, and is for individuals as well as seniors and families and people with special needs. Rents are based on 10 per cent below the municipality's market value.

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you. This program, I believe, has shown great results. My question for the minister: what would she consider the supporting evidence that the Buffalo Housing First program is working?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Mr. Speaker, as the member said, this program does work extremely well. They've housed successfully 40 people that have been chronically homeless, along with support services. In fact, the administration received a very prestigious award last week, that the hon. member is aware of, for their outstanding work. The Canadian Mental Health Association and Potter's Hands Developments were honoured with the Robert Hale Jr. memorial award from the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. That shows you that Housing First does work for our homeless.

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

#### **2:10 Government Information Technology Security**

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his report from last year the Auditor General highlighted very serious concerns about information technology security. Footprints were found from international hackers on government systems. To the Minister of Service Alberta: given the growing sophistication of international hackers, what specific steps are being taken to combat this threat to Albertans' personal information?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the Auditor General's report of last year Service Alberta did indeed accept all of his recommendations. We take the security of Albertans' information very seriously. We have made a number of changes in areas. The first one we've done is that we have a chief



security officer that's responsible for all information, all government departments resident in Service Alberta.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How has the minister improved the design and administration of government websites?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll add some other comments as well on this. We review information security policies with input from all ministries through the CIO Council, that meets on a regular basis with the deputy ministers. We've been tightening security of all government web applications and put in place technical controls to further protect the government network from cyberattacks, and we are working with the Department of Infrastructure to address the physical security of data facilities across the province.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the registries are responsible for health care insurance information as of April 1, 2009, how will that information be protected since the ministry hasn't fully implemented the Auditor General's recommendations?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently there are 20 registry offices across Alberta and a pilot project that we're doing jointly with Alberta Health and Wellness, where Albertans can come and register and get their new Alberta health card, whether they're new residents or whether they have to make a change of information. This is viewed as an excellent measure in giving Albertans access to services. Most certainly, under the registry system the security approaches we take are there within the CARS system.

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

#### Residential Tenancy Disputes

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My office is getting some calls about a program that the government has introduced which allows landlords and tenants to resolve disputes without going to court, not that there's anything wrong with going to court. The residential tenancy dispute resolution service has apparently been quite successful, and I understand that there's funding in this year's budget to take it province-wide. To the Minister of Service Alberta: why isn't this program available yet to all Albertans?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residential tenancy dispute resolution service, or RTDRS, has been very successful. This is a unique program because it's faster and less expensive for tenants to resolve their disputes, and you're not going through the law system. In Edmonton and Calgary it has significantly reduced the amount of time the courts have to spend on landlord and tenant disputes. The service is currently available in Calgary, Edmonton, and northern Alberta. We are planning to have it available province-wide as soon as possible.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: if the funding is now available, what is the holdup? Why can't the program be expanded province-wide?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are moving as quickly as possible to make this service available to all Albertans because of the good work that it does. In northern Alberta we've made the program available also through teleconferencing, and we're looking at that approach in other parts of the province as well. Funding is a key part of the equation, but we also need to have staff and office space available. We're working hard on all these fronts to get the offices up and running.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister: does this program arbitrate all types of disputes, and is the program final, or is there a right of appeal?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The disputes that are dealt with through the RTDRS are disputes over eviction, unpaid rent, unpaid utilities, security deposits, damages, repairs, and other common disagreements. Disputes are heard by an officer who makes a decision that is binding on both parties. Decisions can be appealed to the courts in some cases, but this is rare.

This is an excellent program, an example of the great work that our government is doing. As well, the satisfaction rate is going up on a regular basis, up into the high 80s, and continues to go up.

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

#### Plan for Parks (continued)

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the province's plan for parks has finally been released, Albertans are still left with a number of questions. The plan for parks says that involving Albertans is its number 1 strategy, yet the plan seems to have ignored Albertans' calls in a provincial survey for the creation of new parks, with no new specific commitments for parks in the plan. To the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation: was the minister serious about taking the concerns of Albertans into account, or was the survey merely a publicity stunt to give the illusion of Albertans actually being able to have a say?

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

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, the hon. member makes a good point. The Praxis report did ask for us to develop new parks, but it also asked for us to make them accessible, so we're doing both. We're going in on a regional basis and giving Albertans a voice for the first time in the development of the parks in their region. We haven't always done that, but we're doing it in the future. I'd say to the hon. member that he should read the entire Praxis report. It covered all areas, and I think this park plan captures it.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Will the minister be establishing Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kôp north of Waterton national park as a protected park, something which Albertans have been advocating for several years?

**Mrs. Ady:** Mr. Speaker, as to specific parks, again, we have a regional process that's going out there. We're going to be joining the Minister of SRD and the land-use framework. When we get to that region, we'll take a look at that area.

**Mr. Chase:** Can the minister explain why there is no commitment this year for either the capital region river valley park or the Glenbow Ranch provincial park on Calgary's western doorstep? How can you claim to have a vision for provincial parks when the ones you've already committed to appear to be shelved or getting no additional support?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, I don't know where the hon. member is getting his information from, Mr. Speaker. Some 50 million dollars went to the river valley park last year as they prepare to get ready to build that park. That is going to take a few years, but it's going to be fabulous.

As for the Glenbow, we are well in the process of planning that today. It's very complex because it's between Cochrane and Calgary. We want to get it right, we will get it right, and it'll be a good thing when it's ready.

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

### Carbon Pricing

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy produced a report last week that called for a cap and trade system to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. The CEOs of Suncor, the Royal Bank, and Manulife were quick to endorse the report. They realize that this is the best way to satisfy the main customer of our natural resources, the U.S. To the Environment minister: why won't the minister admit that his stubborn reliance on intensity targets isn't fooling anyone, is isolating Alberta from our best customer, and will ultimately lead to fewer and fewer markets for our natural resources?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I remind the member once again that as of today Alberta is the only jurisdiction in North America that has any regulation. The report of the national round-table is a good report. It talks about the need for a price on carbon. Alberta is comfortable with that. In fact, we've been saying all along that we need a carbon price. There are a number of initiatives that this round-table committee has come out with and discussed that we are in agreement with. The one that we remain concerned with is the emphasis within this report on international carbon trading. We are not going to be paying for someone else to solve their problem while we do not solve ours.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister and his staff from the Public Affairs Bureau are the only ones that believe the spin on intensity targets. Now, last week the U.S. EPA released a report that increases the likelihood that Congress will pass legislation later this year designed to cut CO<sub>2</sub> levels with a hard cap and trade system. However, this government is heading in exactly the opposite direction, refusing to implement regulations that will bring us in line

with the rest of the world. Why won't you admit that your intensity targets are nothing more than a laughable smokescreen that nobody is going to buy except your staff and that does nothing to address climate change?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, intensity targets are the tool that is used to get to hard caps. Without dealing with the individual emitters, we're not going to get to the hard caps. What this member and so many others fail to accept is that you need to start somewhere. You could have all the grandiose promises and aspirational goals in the world, but unless you have a road to get there, you'll never get there. We have a road to get there.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister has never given us a day or a deadline for hard caps in this province. The fact of the matter is that Alberta's energy future is at a crossroads that we can't deny. Our natural resources could very well sustain us through a transition to a green economy, but it will take this government to wake up to today's international political and environmental realities. Now, you can choose whether to ignore the international warnings to clean up our tar sands and risk having our trading partners wedge us out of the market, or you can choose to clean up your act and abandon once and for all your reliance on the myth of intensity targets. Which will it be?

2:20

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the day that we adopt hard caps will be the same day that our competitors adopt hard caps. They're not there, and we're not there, but we're getting there.

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

### Anthony Henday Drive

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the hon. Minister of Transportation announced construction of the overpass at the Anthony Henday in my constituency. That's good news. At the recent annual general meeting of the La Perle Community League Wes Ursulak and other constituents expressed concerns about the Easter weekend tree removal along Stony Plain Road at the Anthony Henday intersection. My first question to the Minister of Transportation: did anyone from the ministry notify my residents and constituents about the removal of these wooded areas, and if so, when and how?

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

**Mr. Ouellette:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to let the hon. member know that the contractor notified residents that were backing onto Anthony Henday Drive of the planned tree removal. More than 120 construction bulletins were delivered to residents on April 3 in the communities of Aldergrove and La Perle. The bulletins were delivered on the east side of Anthony Henday Drive between Whitemud Drive and 100th Avenue.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. My constituents are concerned about what the future of the Henday will look like in their backyards. Can the minister tell us: are there plans for reforestation or construction of a berm?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, when completed, there will be stormwater ponds with wetland features on the northeast and southeast corners of the interchange. The remaining areas will only be seeded to grass. These trees will not be replanted as they would need to be removed for the ultimate configuration of the interchange and the installation of utilities that may be needed at a later date. It's important to remember that this area is part of the transportation and utility corridor that was identified in the late '70s, and it was not ever designated as parkland.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, my second supplemental question is to the same minister. After hearing the minister's response and the concerns of my constituents, I sincerely believe that there was a communication issue with the perception of what the area was going to look like. Will the minister commit to a process whereby department representatives will meet with the La Perle Community League representatives in order to discuss the respective concerns and issues?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, if I heard the question right, he's asking: will we communicate with them? They have; I have already. Actually, the hon. member there called me one night from a community league meeting, and I said that I would look into it and make sure. Since then, I understand that over the weekend some in my department have spoken with the community league leaders. I will try to make sure that the construction people keep them informed on what's happening during that project.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Carbon Pricing (continued)

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 2007 the government commissioned the Jaccard report, which modelled the effect carbon charges would have on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Although the minister adopted some of the recommendations, they were watered down to such an extent that many questioned whether success was possible. The Auditor General warned that without a plan "Alberta could spend a lot of money but not achieve emissions [intensity] targets." To the Minister of Environment: how much money is the minister willing to risk for a strategy that is more about PR than about climate change?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the issue of climate change and greenhouse gas reductions is very much part of the discussions that are currently under way not only here in Alberta but nationally and internationally. With the advent of the Obama administration south of the Canada-U.S. border, we're now starting to get to a point where I believe we are truly going to be able to see some significant and real progress because Alberta will no longer be acting alone but will be acting in concert with all of the rest of North America.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. To the same minister: why has the minister set emissions intensity targets without a real plan to achieve them?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I really take exception to the suggestion that there is no plan to achieve targets. The fact of the matter is that we have legislation in place, and we are achieving

those targets. There are compliance mechanisms that are the law in Alberta. One is to have reductions of intensity, real reductions in CO<sub>2</sub>. Two is to have an Alberta-based offset. Three is to invest in the technology that will lead to large, grand-scale reductions, through implementation of technology such as CCS.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that the Minister of Environment has admitted that the carbon charge is too low, can the minister tell us if this administration will adjust the charge by a larger amount now or whether it will be following B.C.'s lead in instituting smaller yearly increases?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the price for carbon, the compliance mechanism, the contribution to the technology fund, is set at \$15 a tonne as we speak. There is no reason for us to believe that it will not increase over time. We also believe very firmly that there is that balance that needs to be maintained between economic activity and environmental protection. That balance is based upon ensuring that we don't get so far ahead of our competitors that we cease to do business at all. The fact is that as the rest of North America comes onside – and I have every reason to believe that they will – I fully expect that \$15 price to rise quite considerably.

### Grande Prairie Young Offender Centre

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents recently came to me with concerns about the closure of the Grande Prairie Young Offender Centre. They have many concerns about the impact that the closure will have on them and the community of Grande Prairie. My questions are to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. Can the minister explain to my constituents why the centre is being closed?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start off by saying that this decision was certainly not taken lightly. We understood the impact on the community and the offenders and their families and staff. However, the centre has been underutilized for a number of years. It has a capacity for 32 young offenders and last year averaged only 11. We need to ensure that we are using our taxpayers' dollars wisely, and that means running the most effective corrections system we can.

**Mr. Drysdale:** To the same minister: how will the young offenders be reintegrated into the community when they are placed in a young offender centre hundreds of kilometres from their home?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, under the Youth Justice Act all young offenders released from custody must be supervised by a probation officer for a period of time in their communities. We have a strong network of probation officers across the province who provide support and supervision of these young offenders. Probation officers also work very closely with local agencies to refer these young offenders to community programs and services that can further support their efforts to reintegrate back into society. Closing the Grande Prairie Young Offender Centre will not change this.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Again to the same minister: will the closure of the young offender centre result in a facility sitting unused for months or years?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, when we made the decision to close this facility, I directed my staff to begin exploring options with other government departments to utilize this facility. We are continuing to explore all those options. I want to assure the member that this facility will not remain empty for very long, and I also want to reassure the member that all staff who were employed at that facility will have the opportunity to be redeployed within the ministry.

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

### 2:30 Municipal Sustainability Initiative

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The municipal sustainability initiative was an election promise to address the critical need for financial support of infrastructure projects. Two years later and a \$600 million promise made for this year falls \$200 million short. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Contrary to the original news release the 10-year MSI funding has not proven to be the predictable and sustainable revenue source that it was promised to be. Can the minister tell us how many projects across Alberta will be indefinitely deferred because of this \$200 million broken promise?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I need to say to you and this House that the municipal sustainability initiative was created to help municipalities with sustainability and with predictability of funding. In the guidelines it very specifically talks about that if revenue drops, so would the municipal sustainability initiative. In this particular budget and at this particular time revenue has dropped. We have had continuous meetings with the associations, with municipalities about the impact that it may have on municipalities.

**Ms Pastoor:** Given that the minister has reneged on this year's promise of MSI funding levels, next year's promise of \$1.4 billion seems like a pipe dream. How are municipalities supposed to plan for the future and cope with downloaded responsibilities without the dollars to pay for it when the administration doesn't follow through on promises?

**Mr. Danyluk:** This government is committed to municipalities. If the opposition would look at the three-year plan, \$1.2 million dollars plus is allocated. As well, I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, that we have worked with those municipalities to discuss the challenges not only that they have had in the last couple of years but also with this budget. We need to maximize the stimulus program that the federal government talks about. We're working with those municipalities to help maximize that program.

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay. Some of that conversation would assume that the minister intends to fulfill the \$1.4 billion promise in the MSI funding for next year. Where will those funds come from if oil and gas prices don't turn around as quickly or to the degree that is optimistically predicted by our finance minister?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can see that the member from the opposition has never done a budget. What did take place is that we have worked with the municipalities to ensure that we can help support the municipalities to the greatest degree possible. Working with the municipalities, working with the federal government, and working with this government, we can ensure that we will support the municipalities into the future. The MSI program is a good program. It is a program that is going to carry municipalities into the future.

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

### Edmonton Public Library Mill Woods Branch

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Mill Woods branch of the Edmonton public library, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie, is relocating from its current location at Mill Woods Town Centre to a larger space. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please explain what funding is available to support the public libraries?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, libraries are the cornerstones of our communities. We support new and existing libraries in many ways. First of all, last week we announced an increase of \$9 million, to \$32 million, to help support the operational libraries. MSI is available for capital. Lottery grants are available from Culture and Community Spirit. This increased support will help strengthen libraries in Alberta, including Edmonton.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary to the same minister: how much funding from this \$32 million is specifically for the Mill Woods library, please?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Mill Woods library is moving from a 10,000-square foot facility to a 25,000 square foot facility. The city spends, I believe, approximately \$98 million to \$100 million on library funding, of which \$40 million is MSI funding. The city has applied for \$24 million specifically for the Mill Woods library. The question was: what support does the government give? Well, the government gives \$40 million through MSI towards libraries and \$24 million to the library in Mill Woods.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you.

### Sand and Gravel Royalties

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy's annual report notes that audits of industry reporting on oil and gas royalties result in annual adjustments of \$39.8 million in the Crown's favour. This is a lot of money for Albertans. Previously the Auditor General has indicated that Sustainable Resource Development is behind on its audits of gravel royalties. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: why is your department failing to effectively audit gravel royalties owing to this province?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, we're not failing to audit gravel taken from here. I explained last week that various types of audits are done. The difference is that we measure post the taking of the gravel the quantity of gravel taken versus receipts. That way audits are done, and we believe – and we've spoken with the Auditor General about that – that that gives us an adequate monitoring of the situation.

**Mr. Hehr:** As evidenced by the Department of Energy's reviews, audits performed by hard-working civil servants result in more money coming to the Alberta taxpayer. When the government fails to provide the necessary resources to audit these companies, Albertans are being shortchanged from collecting the amount due and owing to them. To the same minister: how many people in your department are actually auditing gravel royalties?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is barking up the wrong tree. Our gravel prices are actually higher than several of the neighbouring provinces. Albertans are getting a completely fair return on their gravel resource. Do you want the cost of highways and home construction and everything to go up? Is it your goal to have the highest gravel prices in western Canada?

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only reason I'm asking these questions is that I want to know how many people are actually performing audits and if these audits are resulting in upticks and more money coming into the coffers compared to what the companies are reporting. Let's get some auditors working on what the companies actually say they are doing.

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is new to this Assembly, but he clearly subscribes to the old Liberal theory that the best way to stimulate employment in the province is to expand the public service. We happen to disagree with that. We think that the private sector creates jobs, not the public sector.

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

### Rural Extension and Industry Development

**Mr. Prins:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. When the Alberta livestock and meat strategy was announced last year, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development asked for an internal review to ensure that the department was aligned to assist the livestock industry with the transformation and revitalization. As a result of the review, the ministry reinforced its focus on rural communities. My questions are to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Can you please update us on the progress of the department following the review?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, our department has strategically restructured its program and service delivery to focus on key priorities to better serve our agriculture industry. Since last October hub offices are now up and running in 13 locations across Alberta, which was long overdue. Alberta's agriculture industry is now better able to access the wealth of specialist knowledge that we have out there, the research and the business development expertise that resides in our department.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. The next question is to the same minister. Since this review was announced last year and the focus on rural communities is ongoing, why is it so critical to adjust the rural extension programs at this time?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, we can all agree, I think, that our province is built on a rich history of rural communities and agriculture, and their success is important to the overall success of Alberta. Rural extension certainly is one of the most effective ways for our industry to access the expert knowledge and research on everything from farm safety to business management that exists within our department. Providing this support through hub offices helps ensure the prosperity and the vitality and the success of the ag industry. It encourages strong communities, one of this government's priorities.

2:40

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. There must be many other programs out there. What are these programs, and how do they assist rural Albertans?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our staff certainly is working closely with the provincial executive of the ag service boards that we have out there and the Association of Alberta Ag Fieldmen to develop an extension model that'll work in all 69 municipalities across the province. Ministry key contacts will be identified for each of the 69 ag service boards. Their role will be to provide support to our agriculture partners and will allow us to sustain our industry and encourage the development of rural communities. In addition, the Ag-Info Centre is available toll-free at 310-FARM to answer questions and direct producers and rural Albertans to additional resources.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 106 questions and responses. In 30 seconds from now we'll move on.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm doing this in the presence of some of our guests, Reverend Bob Kimmerly and Isabel Golightly. I rise today to present a petition signed by 167 citizens who are opposed to the proposals of the government which downgrade health care and cause hardships to Albertans. I'll just read the very brief opening into the record.

We the undersigned are strongly opposed to the proposals of the Government which will downgrade Health Care and cause hardship to millions of Albertans.

We urge the Government of Alberta

- (1) to desist from all plans which will lead to further privatization of our Health Care System,
- (2) to refrain from any plans to reduce the number of Long Term [care] Beds, [and]
- (3) to abandon plans which will require additional costs for drugs to Seniors based on a "means test."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the government pays attention.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and Enterprise.

#### Bill 37

#### Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2009

**Ms Evans:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the first instance, I'd like to introduce Bill 37, the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2009. This being a money bill, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has suggested:

Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly:

It is my pleasure to recommend for your consideration the annexed bill, being the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2009.

Dated April 20 and signed by the Administrator. I request leave to introduce this bill.

**The Speaker:** Actually, there is a correct form, and it's: "This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly."

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a first time]

**Bill 38**  
**Tourism Levy Amendment Act, 2009**

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Tourism Levy Amendment Act, 2009.

**The Speaker:** The number for that bill is Bill 38.

[Motion carried; Bill 38 read a first time]

**Bill 39**  
**Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2009**

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2009, Bill 39.

[Motion carried; Bill 39 read a first time]

**Bill 40**  
**Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2009**

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 40, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2009.

The proposed amendments ensure that Alberta's dividend tax credit and tuition credit are administered in accordance with existing Alberta government policy and that they will be consistent with changes to federal legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 40 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the list of 1,496 Alberta not-for-profit and charitable organizations that will share \$90 million in donation grants in the first year of the community spirit program. Broken down alphabetically by community, this 33-page document showcases the breadth and scope of organizations that will benefit from the community spirit program.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to table five copies of the statistical breakdown of the donation grant distribution across the province. Launched in 2008 this donor-driven program is made up of two components: the donation grant and the enhanced charitable tax credit. The goal is to help increase charitable donations by individual Albertans to Alberta's not-for-profit and charitable organizations. Whether it's \$25,000 for Camp Health, Hope & Happiness, near Stony Plain, to support summer camp experiences, or \$9,202 to the Lac Ste. Anne Foundation for the purchase of library, audio visual, and exercise equipment for seniors programs, or \$9,423 to the Central Alberta Theatre Society in Red Deer, to help with lobby and theatre renovations, these grants will help nonprofit and charitable organizations continue their important work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** That sounds to me, hon. minister, like a ministerial

statement, which might be the venue followed in the future. This is tablings right now.

The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

**Mrs. Ady:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table with the Assembly five copies of the Alberta Plan for Parks. This plan is a blueprint for the development of provincial parks over the next 10 years. Under this plan Albertans are invited to become involved in shaping the future of our parks system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat in his capacity as chair of the Legislative Offices Committee.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'd like to table five copies of the report of the Auditor General of Alberta dated April 2009. Copies of the report are being distributed to all members today.

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

**Mr. Sandhu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling two documents today. On Thursday, April 16, 2009, I attended Kirkness school's 25th anniversary program. It was a great time, with many great memories shared, and I'm sure everyone who attended really enjoyed it. I'm tabling five copies.

Second, in my member's statement today I referenced an *Edmonton Journal* article from April 5 about organ donations. Five copies. Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter that I received today, April 20, 2009, from the office of the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, indicating that they are rejecting my request for information regarding hosting events and expenses under \$600.

My second tabling is the government hosting expenses \$600 and over as obtained from the *Alberta Gazette* for the years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and so far for the calendar year 2008 through to the date of April 15, 2009. This indicates that in the last five years hosting expenses by this government have increased from \$483,000 . . .

**The Speaker:** Okay. But this is tablings right now. I look forward to you doing a member's statement on this matter.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the five documents that the Member for Edmonton-Riverview previously referred to.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, please.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of six letters and e-mails from Albertans opposed to the termination of the Wild Rose Foundation. They say that the Wild Rose Foundation has played a valuable role in supporting volunteer organizations and should be allowed to continue. The letters are from Margaret Holliston, executive director of Camrose and District Support Services; Heather McPherson, executive director of the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation; Joanne Moffat; Cecily Mills; Laura Kennedy; and Christa Jubinville.

Thank you.

**Orders of the Day**  
**Motions for Returns**  
**Assisted Living Facilities**

M2. Ms Notley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all reports or plans prepared between January 1, 2007, and February 10, 2009, regarding the future creation or expansion of assisted living facilities.

[Debate adjourned April 6: Ms Notley speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, it has already been moved. We're in the adjourned portion of it. There are nine minutes left to participate if one wanted to. You adjourned the debate, hon. member. Do you want to continue?

**Ms Notley:** No. I think I have already debated it two Mondays ago, so I'm good. Thanks.

**The Speaker:** So we should call the vote, then?

**Ms Notley:** Yes.

[Motion for a Return 2 lost]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Seniors' Pharmaceutical Plan**

M3. Ms Notley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all letters received by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports, and the Premier between October 1, 2008, and February 10, 2009, regarding the province's new pharmaceutical plan for seniors.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This pharmaceutical plan has been very controversial, and we've heard a very extensive public outcry from people who oppose the higher amounts that middle-income ill seniors have to bear and who see this as a blow to the universality of our health care system. It appears as though the plan was conceived with little or no consultation with the people who have been affected by the change. We have, certainly, ourselves been receiving a great number of letters from seniors and other citizens who are outraged by the proposed changes to the pharmaceutical plan, and we ourselves are very gravely concerned about the negative impact this will have on our health care system overall from a preventative basis as well as on an overall cost-savings basis. As noted previously, we're also very concerned about the attack this represents on universality.

As a result of that, we are looking to see what it was that the ministry had been hearing from Alberta citizens regarding this change. Had they not been receiving the same kind of letters outlining the sorts of concerns that we have articulated? It's for these reasons that we are asking to have this information provided to members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the minister of

health I wish to advise the House that the government wishes to reject this motion for a return. When individuals write letters to either ministers or to the Premier, they do not expect that information to be broadly shared. If the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood would like this information, there is a proper channel, and that is through a FOIP request, in which case a third-party consultation would be conducted with each individual person who wrote, to obtain their permission to share the letter.

I urge all members to vote against this motion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on this point.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Specifically referencing Motion for a Return 3, the concern expressed here has been the numbers of seniors who have been appealing to this government to take into account the contributions they have made throughout their lives. Those in the higher income brackets have paid taxes for all of their years of employment to this government with the hope that in their retirement years their contributions would be recognized. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona pointed out, the whole notion of universality is being called into question in this motion for a return.

Now, the government thankfully did a little bit of an about-face with regard to transgendered individuals. They realized that not only the initial 26 but the other 21 who had begun the programming should receive funding. Unfortunately, at that point they slammed the door for future transgendered operations. The government has already slammed the door on further contracting out of cataract surgery, which, obviously, affects seniors directly. It has cut funding for chiropractic services. It has cut funding for podiatry services. So it's no wonder that we as Albertans are trying to get a sense of where the government is headed with regard to the pharmaceutical plan. At this point all seniors and Albertans know is that the individual coverage for Blue Cross has been tripled. That cost is considerably more than what seniors were previously paying for health care premiums. It seems as though the government gives with its right hand and takes away with its left.

Albertan seniors are extremely concerned. Approximately 200 of them appeared outside the minister of health's office this past Friday in Calgary to register their concerns. The idea of a means test, as I say, goes directly against the idea of universality. Seniors deserve better, and that's what Motion for a Return 3 is calling for.

**The Speaker:** Others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to speak in support of this. Certainly, there has been a public outcry. I'm sure that every MLA sitting in this House is more than aware of that. Phones have been ringing. Letters have been written. E-mails, by the hundreds, actually, have been coming in.

Clearly, I live in a riding with lots of seniors. Beside the fact that it will cost them more money, one of the things that they're concerned about is that the means test also, in their mind, will affect their privacy. They're not used to having to share a lot of that kind of information. That was one of the things that they wanted me to speak about.

My usual question, of course, would be: how was this decision arrived at? Was it a ministerial decision? Was it a board decision? Was there any medical input into it? That's why I think this motion is very important, that we get the answers for that. Yes, of course, we could FOIP it, but we all know how expensive FOIP is. It's probably expensive for a reason: so that nobody will FOIP it and actually find out what's going on.

**The Speaker:** Are there others, or should I call the vote?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to close the debate?

**Ms Notley:** No. You can call the question.

[Motion for a Return 3 lost]

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

#### Public Affairs Bureau Job Descriptions

M4. Ms Notley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the current job descriptions for all positions in the Public Affairs Bureau.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget for the Public Affairs Bureau for 2008-2009 is \$20 million. We would like to know the variety of duties performed by members of the Public Affairs Bureau. We have questions and concerns about the relationship between the Public Affairs Bureau and the government. We've argued in the past that it appears as though the bureau sometimes operates in a partisan way. For example, in question period we sometimes see on the government side that questions and answers are sometimes scripted, when the purpose of QP is for private members to hold the ministers to account. [interjection] Indeed, it appears that way, surprisingly.

Alberta NDP policy is to replace the Public Affairs Bureau with a smaller group of communications professionals who report directly to the ministers and not through the Premier's office. Nonetheless, we believe that there would be value in understanding in more detail the number of people and the resources that we are getting for that \$20 million.

That is the basic reason behind why we are seeking this information. Thank you.

3:00

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I wish to propose an amendment to this motion for a return. I believe that copies of the amendment have already been circulated. The amendment would strike "all positions in the Public Affairs Bureau" and substitute "the following positions in the Public Affairs Bureau: directors, directors of communications, executive directors, and the managing director."

Mr. Speaker, the motion is being amended to include only job descriptions at the director level and above. They cover each of the bureau's areas of responsibility. In addition, I need to point out to all members that only one job description describes the role of all communications directors who are assigned to the various ministries.

Positions below the director are managers and professional communications staff who support directors in positions that are technical or administrative in nature. This would include the ACN co-ordinator, administrative assistant, financial administrator, human resource assistant, human resource manager, information technology supervisor, internal communications manager, Internet systems developer, public affairs officer, records management assistant, senior graphic designer, systems analyst, and technical support specialist. I would advise all members that the job descriptions for these various levels of communications careers within the Public Affairs Bureau are outlined on the website, which can be found through the government link on the home page.

**The Speaker:** On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Speaking very specifically to the amendment, I appreciate the hon. deputy House leader's comments with regard to the job descriptions of individuals below being included on the website. The specific job positions of the individuals who are most likely in receipt of this last year's bonusing will provide part of that information. We also realize that the people who are farther down the chain of command, the actual public servants, are probably less likely to have qualified for the bonusing although in their job description I would hope that that information would be included.

One of the reasons, I'm assuming, for asking for this information has to do with, as the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona pointed out, the growing budget connected with the Public Affairs Bureau. When Premier Klein decided to bring the Public Affairs Bureau directly under his wing, a tremendous amount of control was then exercised within the Premier's office. Premier Stelmach, obviously . . .

**The Speaker:** No, no, no. That's about the fourth time.

**Mr. Chase:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I should know better.

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Chase:** The Premier followed through with our former Premier Klein's mandate and has direct control over the Public Affairs Bureau, which, again, is becoming more and more costly to Albertans and delivering a service that is questionable. Therefore, having these positions not only spelled out but the amount of money that goes to these positions, which I would hope would be part of the job description, and the eligibility for bonusing is extremely important.

As our new Premier has indicated, transparency and accountability are foremost in his mind. For that follow-through, then, these positions, the qualifications expected for the positions, the type of job description required, the remuneration, the potentials for bonusing, all these details need to be brought out to Albertans. I'm sure that Albertans, whether through the website that the hon. Minister of Environment pointed out or in combination with Motion for a Return 4, would like to know how many individuals are employed within the Public Affairs Bureau. As has been noted, it is taking several millions of Alberta taxpayers' dollars to deliver this information.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again I apologize for the name transgression.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the amendment.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do note the information provided by the deputy House leader with respect to some of the job descriptions being available on the website. However, it is my understanding that we don't have a clear description of some of the following positions: senior communications manager; manager, communications planning; manager, internal communications; brand initiative manager; advertising consultant or advertising co-ordinator; or corporate identity consultant, which sounds like a very unique little term for a position. It seems to me that there's no reason why these job descriptions should not be publicly available.



As we've already noted, with a budget of \$20 million, Albertans have a right to know the details of this Public Affairs budget and where it is that we're paying for people and where they actually are. Again, although we appreciate that some of the information is forthcoming through this amendment, we don't believe that it gives as much information as we are seeking at this point. For that reason we can't support it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others on this amendment? Then I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Speaker:** On the motion as amended, additional speakers?

Shall I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to close the debate, or should I just call the question?

**Ms Notley:** Question.

[Motion for a Return 4 as amended carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Health System Restructuring

M6. Ms Notley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the results, data, and analyses of all public opinion polls, focus groups, surveys, and questionnaires undertaken by or on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Wellness between January 1, 2007, and February 10, 2009, regarding the elimination or replacement of regional health boards with the Alberta Health Services Board.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this replacement, this decision, is another change that the minister of health has made to our health care system that involved no apparent public consultation. The public at least has a right to know what information the ministry took into account before deciding to make this change.

It's particularly important given that the decision was taken mere months after a provincial general election where there was absolutely no discussion of this type of change to our health care system and, certainly, no discussion or consultation in a number of the smaller regions throughout the province, which stand to lose significant services and, indeed, which we've already discovered since the creation of this board will lose significant services and facilities. There was no discussion with voters, Albertans, in these regions during the provincial general election, so we are very interested in finding out what type of public consultation this government chose to undertake before proceeding with this initiative. Certainly, we know that they have copious dollars at their disposal for polling and that their polling happens quite regularly as do focus groups and other surveys. It would seem appropriate that Albertans be given the opportunity to learn what the ultimate consensus was of voters on these issues, were there any kind of public consultation.

Going back to the issue in general, through the transition time, when the Alberta Health Services Board has been replacing the regional health boards, there has without question been evidence that health care problems have been worsening quite significantly. We've only just recently talked about the issue of increasing bed shortages and waiting lists for surgeries in the area of Calgary.

We've heard the recent comments by the president of the Calgary & Area Physicians' Association, who claims that the province has probably lost at least a year of potential progress because of the administrative upheaval.

3:10

The question that we're asking here, of course, refers not only to the information that preceded the decision but also any kind of polling or focus groups or surveying or information that the government has collected on its own behalf since this decision was taken, up to February 10, 2009. Once again, I believe that because this is such an incredibly critical and important issue to Albertans across the province, it only makes sense that they be given access to the information that the government not only made its initial decision on but also is premising its decision to stay the course and carry on, notwithstanding the many, many problems that we have observed over the course of the last nine months.

It is with this background in mind that we are pursuing this information, and I certainly call on my colleagues here in the Legislature on behalf of Albertans who are interested in these issues to support my motion to have this information tabled and made public in the interests of full democratic discussion and transparency.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the minister of health I wish to urge members to reject this motion. The rationale is really quite simple. There were no public opinion polls, focus groups, surveys, or questionnaires undertaken by or on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Wellness between January 1, 2007, and February 10, 2009, regarding the elimination or replacement of regional health boards with the Alberta Health Services Board. Therefore, there is nothing to provide to the member.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on this point.

**Ms Pastoor:** There really aren't many points left, I think, after what the hon. member has just said previous to this. However, it certainly opens up the question of why weren't any of these things done, and this is probably where the original question came from.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to close the debate.

**Ms Notley:** Question.

[Motion for a Return 6 lost]

**The Speaker:** The motion is defeated, but the question has been answered.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

### Working Conditions for Temporary Foreign Workers

M10. Ms Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing, for the period January 1, 2005, to December 31, 2008, a copy of all complaints filed on behalf of temporary foreign workers with the Ministry of Employment and Immigration regarding working conditions.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. As has been discussed at some length within this Legislature over the last year, certainly since I've been

here, anyway, Alberta has brought in unprecedentedly large numbers of temporary foreign workers. We have had very few controls or protections in place to ensure that their working conditions are of a level and a standard that we would expect for all Albertans. We have no doubt that these individuals are very deeply vulnerable to exploitation.

We want to know how many temporary foreign workers are having problems with working conditions and what type of problems they are having and how they are being solved. We are looking for this information from the government although we will start out by saying that we know, because of the way in which the system works, there are probably a great number of concerns that are never actually forwarded to the government because of concerns about retaliation and a lack of knowledge about the available assistance that may be at their disposal.

Nonetheless, with that in mind, I know that in April of '07 the Alberta Federation of Labour had decided to launch a temporary foreign worker advocate program to offer free services to temporary foreign workers needing assistance with work-related problems, and in six months the advocate had received more than 1,400 calls. So we know that there are problems, and we would like to know how many the government has actually been dealing with and how they've been dealing with them. It's important as well for Albertans to have this information made public.

These temporary foreign workers are coming into our province, and a good deal of the economic prosperity which we have until very recently been enjoying has taken place on their backs. It is our responsibility, I would suggest, that we have a very clear insight not only in terms of the nature and the frequency and the volume of complaints that have been levied by these temporary foreign workers but also for us to have some piece of information on how they are resolved and if they are resolved and whether or not we're doing an adequate job of ensuring that there is some form of protection at their disposal.

I believe that there may be an amendment coming, and I will speak to it at that time. Those are the primary reasons behind our call for this information. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Employment and Immigration I would like to propose an amendment to the motion. I believe that copies of such amendment have been circulated. The intent of the amendment is to change the date from January 1, 2005, to December 1, 2006. The reason for this is that we do not have documents dating back that far, so the change of the date to December 1, 2006, will facilitate the actual release of documents that exist.

Secondly, there is a proposal within the amendment to strike out the word "copy" and substitute "summary report." The reason for this is that workers making complaints do so in confidence, and we must be careful not to compromise their rights under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and, therefore, would propose to provide a summary of complaints rather than copies of the individual complaints.

Mr. Speaker, the motion as amended would now read that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing "for the period December 1, 2006, to December 31, 2008, a summary report of all complaints filed on behalf of temporary foreign workers with the Ministry of Employment and Immigration regarding working conditions."

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I appreciate the intentions of the Minister of Employment and Immigration in coming forward to answer at least part of our question with respect to this – I think some of this information will be valuable, or I hope it will – the concern that I have is simply that I'm not sure what a summary of complaints will look like. Will it just say: March, 20 complaints? Will it say: March, 20 complaints, broken down by type? Will it be complaints broken down by region? Will it be complaints broken down by detailed cause of action? Or will it just simply be complaints with identifying information removed? I would suggest that the latter would be the way in which to ensure we get the full picture of the extent and breadth and nature of the complaints received while at the same time ensuring the privacy of the individuals involved. That is the way I would rather see this amendment proceed.

I am quite concerned that this information being simply provided in summary form will result in our not receiving the kind of detailed information that we need to have in order to truly assess whether or not we are at this point doing a good job protecting these people, whether we have done any kind of good job in the past protecting them, and, in particular, whether the problem is of such a breadth that it further supports our need to do a better job to protect these people as they are here now. I've certainly found in my previous life that it's very possible for summaries of complaints to become so generalized that the value of the information they provide is negligible.

3:20

Unfortunately, then, we can't support this amendment unless we're able to see from some other member in support of the amendment some information about it that outlines exactly what the summary would look like. Otherwise, we unfortunately have to see this as something that would not provide the kind of information that we need while still preserving the privacy of those as required under the law. I do believe it is certainly possible to do that, but I don't think it's necessary to reduce the scope of the information received by members of the House to the extent which would occur were this amendment to our motion to go forward.

It is for that reason that I cannot support the amendment. However, I do hope that members of the House will go forward and support our original proposal because we do absolutely need to receive this information in a more comprehensive fashion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on the amendment.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. In speaking to the amendment, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, the Minister of Environment, said that the government, for whatever reason, did not track – or it appears from his comments – complaints received from temporary foreign workers for the year January 1, 2005, to December 31, 2005, and again it appears that for a second year running, January 1, 2006, until, we'll say, December 1, 2006, noted here on the amendment, it didn't collect information.

I find that hard to believe, that either the information wasn't collected or that there weren't any complaints over a two-year period. My understanding is that in the 2008-2009 year we had between 50,000 and 60,000 temporary foreign workers working in this province. I know that Gil McGowan, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, along with the two opposition parties championed concerns with regard to temporary foreign workers.

Another statistic that is missing through this amendment is the

whole idea that we as a province want to encourage immigration. We have been trying to accomplish that in sort of a bit-by-bit approach through our provincial nominee program. I recall just recently the Minister of Employment and Immigration talking about having exceeded the 2008-2009 limits. I think there were approximately 3,500 individuals who were nominated, and he upped the target for the 2009-2010 year to in excess of 4,000. I commend the government for upping the process whereby temporary foreign workers with particular skill sets get a fast track through the provincial nominee program towards permanent citizenship.

However, if you look at last year's numbers and the proposal for next year's numbers, we're talking less than 8,000 people, yet we have currently employed and quickly returning to their country of origin, unfortunately, due to this recession approximately 60,000 people. The fact that for whatever reason the government has encouraged them to come to Alberta and take on jobs that not only help them personally but help the overall Alberta economy, that we don't have statistics for them makes me wonder about our immigration processes along with the federal government.

Yes, the temporary foreign worker program is initiated by the federal government, but once they get within the confines of our provincial borders, there is an expectation that there would be tracking associated with it. The amendment that wants to just simply erase two years of temporary foreign worker history is a great concern to me.

Now, my second concern is with the other part of the amendment, where it is striking out "copy" and substituting "summary report." I fully understand the need for the government to maintain the security of individuals. They do that quite frequently through the FOIPing process by crossing out the names but providing the specific details. Unfortunately, the FOIP process is a very lengthy one. It's also a very expensive one, whether it's members of the opposition seeking that information or media or a private Albertan. What the hon. member has asked for in this particular Motion for a Return 10 is to cut through all the red tape associated with it and give us a sense as to the working conditions of temporary foreign workers.

I would think that this would be in not only the government's best interest but in the province of Alberta as a whole's best interest to investigate the number of complaints, the types of complaints, the regions from which the complaints were taken, and specific examples as opposed to précis or generic summaries. I cannot believe that even though we're in a recession, and we don't know how long that recession is going to take place, we wouldn't want to say to the world: Alberta is a number one destination, whether you're coming here on a temporary visa to work or whether you're seeking to immigrate to this wonderful province.

Cutting back the request to a generic summary and eliminating two entire years of Alberta's history sends a message to any individuals who would be considering immigrating to Alberta that everything is not above board, information is scrutinized, information is highly regulated. We'll never get a sense of the small number of temporary foreign workers who felt brave enough to go either to the AFL or report to the hon. NDP caucus or Alberta's Official Opposition, who are, I am sure, just a small, tiny, tip-of-the-iceberg consideration to those who felt that they would lose their jobs and didn't report. Without numbers, without details any notion of transparency and accountability, any attempt on Alberta's part to bring in immigration, whether on a temporary basis or for full-time immigration status through the provincial nominee program, gets lost.

It's for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, in the name of transparency and accountability and a desire to show the world that we are the

destination of choice, that I would ask members to support the motion prior to its amendment.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listening to this member, I'm a little confused. I'm wondering if this member's intention is to protect our foreign workers. If you were to look through the *Hansard* and not only the *Hansard* but also the mass media, you will find that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on behalf of the Liberal opposition has been harping for the last few months in favour of packing these workers' bags right now and shipping them back wherever they came from. Whether they're in the midst of a contract or not, just get rid of them because the economy has slowed down a little.

As a matter of fact, their position on foreign workers is no different, Mr. Speaker, than you going to a local outlet and renting a tool from Fasco, renting a tool only for when you need it and when you no longer need it, disposing of it as if it had no value and shipping it back home. That is, clearly, a well-elaborated Liberal position on foreign workers. We needed them when we wanted cheap labour. We needed them when we wanted some work done. Now that we no longer need them, when the job at Tim Hortons perhaps looks somewhat desirable to locals, get rid of them, ship them back home, and break any and all contracts that we may have.

For this member to now stand up and tell us that he really, honestly cares for foreign workers and that he wants information and longitudinal studies on how well they're doing in their places of employment is nothing, Mr. Speaker, other than shameful.

3:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity has already spoken on the amendment.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay. I'll just be very brief. That was an interesting interpretation of what actually has transpired from this side of the table. I don't recall saying: send them home. I think part of the conversation was: make sure that they have the opportunity to be citizens, but also make sure that the ones that we are bringing over are fulfilling a need.

One of the reasons that I would stand up against this amendment is because I, too, like my colleague from Calgary-Varsity, am amazed that there is no documentation since December 1 of '06. I would have to ask why that would be occurring. I can't believe that these stats aren't being kept on a regular basis.

One of the reasons that I think this information is important is because there have been, certainly, many instances that came through my office of temporary foreign workers who have had to and been lucky enough to hook up with an immigration centre or citizens that actually are willing to help them. Sometimes things are going on, and the only way that they are being told what's going on is through their interpreter. Often they're at the mercy of the interpreter, who is paid for by the employer from whom they are either trying to understand what they're supposed to be doing or whom they actually lodge that complaint against.

I think that having this information is very necessary because I believe that, certainly, in the future we will always have temporary foreign workers. I think the province will pick up over the next number of years, and we will still need some temporary foreign workers because the rest of the country will also start to pick up. We

do know that we've already lost some who wanted to fulfill their heart's desire and returned to the Atlantic provinces.

I think it's very important that we have this information so that we can go forward and have the full protection for our temporary foreign workers.

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Speaker:** We now can have further debate on the motion as amended, or we can call the question on the motion as amended.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity first, on the motion as amended.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Just to be brief and have an opportunity to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, the *Hansard* that he so eloquently referenced will also show the number of times that we as the Official Opposition have stood up and urged the government to improve and increase its provincial nomination program so that these people, who were enticed not by the Liberal opposition to fulfill jobs but by the government, which made various promises to these individuals that Alberta was a land of milk and honey and opportunity – those short-term contracts were not signed by members of the Official Opposition. They were signed by the government.

The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is correct. Throughout the time period we have said – and we're on record, and I don't deny that record – that jobs are for Albertans first, whether they be unemployed farm labourers, whether they be First Nations individuals, whether they be members of unionized organizations or non-unionized organizations. We have submitted petitions along that line, saying: first Alberta, second Canada, third North America. Then if there is a need and when that need is recognized, we go global, and we honour the individuals' contributions with a reward of citizenship for work well done as opposed to the use and abuse that the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs attributed to the Liberal Party.

In terms of speaking to the motion for a return, we're in favour of citizenship. We're in favour of a provincial nominee program because there are rights and protections within citizenship that are not awarded or recognized or regulated for temporary foreign workers. If we're going to improve our Alberta fabric, then we have to give these people stability, and a temporary foreign work program does not achieve that.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 10 as amended carried]

### Wildlife Population Data

M11. Ms Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all reports, briefing notes, backgrounders, and memoranda regarding grizzly bear, wolf, and woodland caribou populations in Alberta prepared by or for the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development between January 1, 2004, and February 10, 2009.

**Ms Notley:** The reason we are seeking this information, again, is because it's important for us to know the state of our wildlife and what protections are being put in place to protect Alberta's wild animals or not, as the case may be. The woodland caribou is an endangered species, and in response to this situation the government implemented a wolf cull. It was a controversial plan to kill wolf pups and sterilize their parents in order to strengthen populations near Jasper national park in 2006. A number of conservationists

pointed out that there were other factors contributing to the decline of the woodland caribou, mostly increased industrial development. The wolf cull was implemented again in 2008 near Rocky Mountain House in order to protect the elk populations.

We also believe that grizzly bears should have the classification of endangered because of their dwindling population. Studies have shown that since 2002 grizzly bear populations have dwindled from about 1,000 to less than 500 today. [interjections] One of the biggest threats to the population is the density of access roads that penetrate habitat.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Anyway, I hear from the opposite side that it's not true, but of course the most effective way to resolve the question one way would be to provide members of this House with copies of all reports, briefing notes, backgrounders, and memorandums regarding the populations throughout the province, not just selected memoranda but, indeed, everything that the minister has had given to him between January 1, '04, and February 10, 2009.

I see that it already manages to get a few members opposite engaged ever so briefly, so it clearly is one of those issues that warrants full distribution of information so that we can engage in a well-informed debate. It is for that reason that I am seeking to have that information made available to all members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development I would like to propose an amendment to Motion for a Return 11, the intent of which would be to result in the motion reading:

Copies of all reports and associated backgrounders containing analysis done on such reports regarding grizzly bear, wolf, and woodland caribou populations in Alberta prepared by or for the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development between January 1, 2004, and February 10, 2009.

This amendment is based on the following reasons, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the request in the originally worded motion is far too broad and consists of a large volume of records that could be quite overwhelming. Secondly, the department wants to provide the member with a reasonable amount of meaningful material respecting the intent of the request.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support this amendment.

3:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the amendment.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the concern that the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has about my ability to manage copious amounts of information. Yes. Much appreciated. However, it appears to me, when I read through the amendment, that what it would do is that we would be losing, through the amendment, briefing notes and memorandums within the ministry on this issue. I mean, I've read a lot of memos and a lot of briefing notes, and they actually tend to be shorter than reports and backgrounders. I would suspect that, really, the concern that the minister has with respect to my ability or my caucus's ability to read and digest this information is probably overdone and that we probably are quite capable of reviewing and distilling that information if it were provided to us. Indeed, I'm quite sure that other

members of the House would also be quite capable of reviewing and distilling that information.

Of course, now I can't help but wonder exactly which briefing note or which memorandum includes information that the minister would rather we not have. Had it not been for those two slight changes, I would have thought that reading the reports and the backgrounders would have been more than adequate, but now the absence of the briefing notes and the memorandums leads me to query whether in fact the information is quite as black and white as we've been led to believe.

Notwithstanding the concerns about the copious amounts of paper, I do believe that we are equipped to review not only the reports and the backgrounders but also the briefing notes and the memoranda on this issue, and it would be of value, again, to all members of the Assembly to be able to have the full story put before us so that we could evaluate and make the best decisions on behalf of Albertans and also on behalf of the goal of protecting and preserving our wildlife populations.

Unfortunately, I am unable to completely support the amendment because it would appear to exempt two smaller sources of information from our review. I'm always a sort of more-information-is-good kind of person, so I would prefer to see all the information come forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. This is an unusual position where I find myself. I see myself somewhere in between the government's position and the NDP position. [interjections] I find it a very comfortable place to be, actually.

**An Hon. Member:** On the fence.

**Mr. Chase:** No, dedicated in the trenches rather than on the fence is where I would find myself.

Anyway, to the Speaker and through the Speaker. I understand the government's sensitivity with regard to briefing notes. Briefing notes are considered, basically, the belonging, the possession of the minister. While I don't necessarily agree with that, I understand the sensitivity associated with it. However, the backgrounders and memoranda are extremely important because this government has participated in initiatives, on one hand, to save wolves and reintroduce them into Yellowstone.

I just want to very briefly indicate my thanks to a great Alberta songwriter and singer, and that's Ian Tyson, who together with his group wrote *Yellowhead to Yellowstone*, which tells the story of the wolves that were taken from Alberta, and it personifies the struggle they had as they encountered local wolves and tried to create a larger pack and survive.

Anyway, that's my tribute to Ian Tyson. That particular song, *Yellowhead to Yellowstone*, was performed by a group that consisted of a number of backup musicians from Ian Tyson's band who performed at the East Coulee music festival the first week in April.

**An Hon. Member:** Relevance.

**Mr. Chase:** The relevance is wolves and information on wolves.

As I said, this government's attitude towards wolves changes. Wolves were good enough to re-establish in packs in Montana and to re-establish in packs in Wyoming, but they weren't good enough to have an existence as part of the food chain in Alberta.

The government tried to blame wolves for the disappearance of

woodland caribou. The government completely negated the effect of seismic and resource extraction roads that have turned woodland caribou habitat into a man-made criss-cross. They blamed the wolves. They targeted the wolves through aerial attack from helicopter, they targeted the wolves through poisoning. It was only when public outcry was such that they basically changed their aerial targets from wolves to deer in southeast Alberta in an attempt to get a handle on CWD. Yet this government has been supportive of importing elk and commercializing deer so that CWD, that has been detected in Saskatchewan, is also showing up in Alberta. Instead of testing the deer and the elk, the government would rather shoot the wild ones.

The information, the backgrounds and memoranda, not only on wolves but on their relationship to woodland caribou populations is extremely relevant. If we want to stop short of briefing notes, I would think that between what has been requested, backgrounders and memoranda, we would probably get a better handle.

Now, with specific regard to grizzly bears, the government seems to prize anecdotal evidence of a hunter who during a seasonal hunting experience might have seen the evidence of a grizzly, whether it's steaming or whether it's just lying there or whether it's bits of fur on a bush, but they don't seem nearly as concerned about the reports of the scientists and environmentalists and naturalists and the studies that they've taken. They seem to put a disproportionate weight on information from anecdotal.

Now, I realize that we don't have enough conservationists, that we don't have enough scientists, but taking so much evidence on anecdotal in specific zones when you consider that the whole southeastern part of Alberta is outside the auspices of hunting for grizzlies even before the moratorium, then hunters aren't going to be reporting on grizzly evidence. Yes, they still have opportunities to go after deer and elk and moose, and occasionally they might come across a grizzly during that particular experience, but we have such a vast province that depending on anecdotal evidence of hunters who in some cases do not wish to see a moratorium – they do not wish to see a grizzly bear being declared an endangered species because they have a desire to add a grizzly to their trophy as opposed to their meat collection.

In my background I've been a meat hunter. That's the kind of experience that I learned from my father. The size of the rack was not important; the size of the paw was not important. It was the quality of the meat. This idea of trophy hunting concerns me greatly. We have a natural process which, unfortunately, has been interfered with in this province through unregulated resource roads for extraction and seismic, but to put the blame onto the animal as opposed to recognizing where the blame belongs and not providing support for the animal but just simply eradicating it is unacceptable.

3:50

The information that is being proposed in this amendment is halfway there. That's why I am trying to provide a little bit of leeway to the government and ask to find information somewhere between: keep your briefing notes to yourself if that's going to make you happy, but provide the backgrounders, provide the memoranda so that we can get an accurate indication of what our wildlife population looks like.

In Banff just recently there was an avalanche that wiped out a significant number of a herd of woodland caribou. For the government to put other caribou further in danger by not maximizing the number of resource extraction roads, using the same roads for timber as for oil and gas as for seismic, is doing not only the animals but Albertans in general a disservice.

As I say, whether being a middle-of-the-road position is considered something that this government despises, if being an individual

who believes in inclusion and looking at both sides is something to be greeted in a negative fashion by this government, I make no apologies. We have a wonderful province. If it's going to continue, if my grandson is going to get to see a wolf or a grizzly bear other than in a zoo circumstance or see a woodland caribou, I want to make sure this government is taking action to preserve these species. I want to see this government taking action on wildlife corridors, Y2Y, Yukon to Yellowstone.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** On the amendment, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not quite as opposed to the amendment perhaps as the previous speakers because I really feel that this is probably better than nothing, and I do believe that we need to get this information out there. Relying on anecdotal information is never the way to go, but in order for people to really understand and be able to write letters and be able to complain and be able to get people interested, they have to know what's going on. That's why I think that the information that they would share, rather than having to dig it all out through FOIP, which would be astronomical because there are many, many, many reports and certainly briefing notes and those sorts of things – some of them, of course, are probably hidden for 15 years as of the legislation of last year anyway.

I would go on record as saying that I think the amendment probably is worthy of support because at least it would be something rather than nothing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wish to speak on the amendment?

Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Motion for a Return 11 as amended carried]

#### **Private-public Partnership for Building Schools**

M12. Ms Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the initial proposal submitted by Babcock & Brown Public Partnerships Limited to the Ministry of Education for the construction of 18 Alberta schools, the findings of the selection process that resulted in Babcock & Brown Public Partnerships Limited winning a contract, the research that concluded that \$118 million would be saved by constructing schools through P3s instead of through traditional methods, and the agreement signed between the government and Babcock & Brown Public Partnerships Limited to design, build, finance, and maintain these schools.

**Ms Notley:** As we know, the government has an agreement with Babcock & Brown Public Partnerships Limited to design, build, finance, and maintain 18 new schools in Calgary and Edmonton projected to open sometime in 2010. The agreement is set for a 30-year term. Basically, the reason we are seeking out this information is because this deal amounts to roughly a \$650 million obligation on the part of Alberta taxpayers. Yet as a result of it being financed through a public-private partnership, we, of course, have this even thicker than usual cloak of secrecy that falls over the expenditure of that money on behalf of Alberta. Frankly, it shocks me that we can look at making that kind of expenditure and have so little public

accountability for how it proceeds, whether it proceeds well, effectively, whether it meets the needs of the community, whether it meets the needs of Alberta taxpayers, whether it meets the needs of our bottom line, any of those things.

Of course, the government is able to simply not proceed with providing us that information under the cloak of: oh, well, it's a public-private partnership, and we couldn't possibly make that information available because it's private information that belongs to the corporation in question. I would suggest that it is well within the capacity of this government to suggest that where private industry agrees to work with government to construct capital projects, they simply need to be prepared that more information is going to become public. That's part of the quid pro quo for successfully signing what appears to be about a \$650 million contract. I hardly think that's unreasonable.

Instead, what we have are these repeated opportunities for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars to just slip through the taxpayers' fingers into these P3 financing arrangements where we lose all oversight and all control over how that money is spent. It strikes me that above and beyond all the other policy perspectives and public policy arguments against the effectiveness and the merits of P3 development, simply as taxpayers that particular one, that one issue, ought to make people stop and say: "No, we can't accept that. We cannot agree that huge, huge portions of our tax dollars must be slipped under the table somewhere to a place where we will never see them again and will never be allowed the opportunity to assess the efficacy with which they were expended."

Our offices, of course, did a FOIP request on this issue, and we were given a very, very short document with a whole bunch of pages blanked out. More importantly, all the math was blacked out because, of course, we had asked how it is that we came up with this notion that we as taxpayers would save \$118 million on a \$750 million project by pursuing a P3 arrangement. You know, quite reasonably we asked for the basis for this math. Again, as people who are in this House with an obligation to represent the best interests of taxpayers, to make sure that the issue is discussed broadly, comprehensively, thoughtfully, in a well-researched, well-informed manner, we simply asked for this information to be provided so that the assumptions underlying those kinds of conclusions could be openly debated and considered, but throughout our repeated requests we have never been given access to that information.

I think that that is an overwhelming rejection of our responsibility to Alberta, to Albertans, to Alberta voters, to Alberta taxpayers. This government perceives that it is the normal course of business that we would hand out really, literally, billions and billions of dollars or what may appear to be billions of dollars, ultimately if you add up all the different P3s, to private corporations and then actively and intentionally tie our hands behind our backs so that we are simply not able to engage in any kind of cost-benefit analysis for these types of investments.

4:00

It was with this objective in mind and this concern about how well a job we are doing here in this House for the people that elected us that we thought we would bring this matter to the Legislative Assembly. As I've said, under the FOIP provisions we have been unable to have that information provided to us because the whole issue of proprietary commercial information has been used to ensure that that information not go forward.

I certainly believe that there is absolutely no reason under that particular heading that the math underlying the \$118 million in

alleged cost savings cannot be widely distributed to Albertans for us to analyze. I, frankly, find that very hard to believe because, presumably, that \$118 million assessment was done before we actually decided who would receive the final contract. In any event, even if that wasn't the case, this Assembly has the ability to provide information and to table information to members of the Assembly if ultimately it's deemed to be in the best interests of taxpayers.

I would suggest that it's very possible to provide far more information than has been provided to date without in any way jeopardizing any sort of proprietary information that could do any sort of genuine damage to the business interests of this particular company and that, on the contrary, that particular heading under which we exclude the distribution of information to the public about the public interests is far overused and far too often relied on and that there is much more room for us to be provided with the kind of information that we as Members of the Legislative Assembly have a right and an obligation to ask for and to know and to evaluate on behalf of Albertans.

It's for that reason that we are making this motion here today, seeking once and for all this information which for two years now has been kept outside of the public sphere for Albertans to view.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure I would like to urge members to reject this motion. This motion basically requests four documents: one is the initial proposal of the successful proponent; next, the findings of the selection process; the research from the public-sector comparator; and a signed agreement between the government and the successful proponent. This is all to do with the Alberta schools alternative procurement project, or ASAP 1. Don't you love the acronyms around this place?

The minister is recommending that we reject this motion for a number of reasons. Firstly, the signed agreement is already on the Ministry of Education website. Secondly, the financial information already released is consistent with what's available for other publicly tendered construction project bids. Also, Mr. Speaker, some of the information can't be released because it does have proprietary commercial information included in it, and releasing it could take away from the competitiveness of the process. It jeopardizes the proponent's ability to do business or to competitively bid on other projects. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it may even negatively influence the bid process which is currently under way for ASAP 2.

There is a rigorous process used to evaluate the bids. We're confident that the public-sector comparator is accurate. It's based on data from our own experiences building and maintaining schools all over the province, and it includes analyses from the independent consultants, Tech-Cost, and the accounting firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers. I need to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the successful proponent and the public-sector comparator numbers are already public. They, too, are on Education's website and the news release from September of 2008.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is initiating an audit of the ASAP 1 process, and the results of that audit are expected in October of this year.

For all of these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to reject this motion.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. This government views P3s as

the greatest invention since sliced bread but will not provide the details to explain their tremendous enthusiasm. Now, the government has indicated through a series of puffball questions that Babcock & Brown just coincidentally happens to be the same name as the English subsidiary that is providing the financing now that the mother company from Australia has gone bankrupt. They've assured this House and, through this House, all Albertans that there is no problem over the next 30 years of what must have been a wonderfully sweet deal, considering that it was arranged at close to the height of the boom period. Now, the information contained on the website and the so-called public-sector comparator are far from detailed. How those figures were arrived at is not included as part of the website.

With regard to these 18 P3s the publicly elected trustees had no choice whatsoever. It was to either take a P3 or not get a school. So much for the collaborative, collegial, intergovernmental approach.

As to the proprietary nature of the information Babcock & Brown would be basically competing against itself. The sweetheart deal that they got during this boom period in order to successfully rebid for the second set of 32 schools would have to be considerably lower because the cost of steel, the cost of cement, the cost of building materials, and the cost of labour have dramatically reduced during this recessionary period. So if there is some fear on the government's behalf that Babcock & Brown's bid is somehow going to be prejudiced for the next 32 schools unless the government already has predetermined that they're going to be the recipient of the bid, then providing detail that's already out there – the contract is over in the construction sense.

What remains to be seen, of course, is the keeping up of the infrastructure over the 30 years of the contract. That is such a convoluted piece of contracting that the role of the school boards in terms of daily maintenance, cleaning, and so on, versus the role of Babcock & Brown to make sure that the buildings don't fall around the students' ears, certainly isn't clearly spelled out on the website. That's the type of information we need to have.

I was very pleased when the AG indicated that he was going to provide an analysis of the 18 contracts to date. This is something that I was asking for, and when he came ahead with it, I was extremely pleased.

We need to have a sense and Albertans need to believe that this government's idea of borrowing against the future – it's cheaper to borrow money than it is to expend the money that was set aside in either our stability fund or our capital fund. If you're going to back up those mathematical beliefs, then this Babcock & Brown would be a good first place to demonstrate the reasoning behind why it's better to borrow, particularly at a time when we had sufficient money through our royalties and our surpluses to actually build them in a traditional manner, which we have maintained all along would have been cheaper and would not have required Albertans and their children to submit themselves to a 30-year mortgage on schools.

**4:10**

Now, it's interesting that part of the secrecy behind the contracting is not even being revealed to the school boards as to why the government is opposed to having preschool and after-school programs in these P3 schools. Somehow that's part of the proprietary information where the contractor and the investor, Babcock & Brown, get to dictate to the public school boards, who in theory own the schools but have to submit themselves to the will of the financier, whose information is hidden by the government.

The requests are all part of the transparency and accountability that this government has prided itself on under the watch of our Premier. By not providing this information and using proprietary information as an excuse, Albertans will never know what has

happened until such time as this 40-year-and-running government is forced to vacate its position, and at that point the whirring that we will be hearing will be the shredding of document information.

It's a reasonable request. It has to do with transparency. It has to do with accountability. It has to do with the 30 years that this government has sentenced Alberta's children to in terms of paying for this P3 contract. For a variety of reasons I support the hon. mover of this Motion for a Return 12, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. We, too, would like to peer inside this extremely sweet deal.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would you like to close the debate, hon. member?

**Ms Notley:** No. Question.

[Motion for a Return 12 lost]

### Carbon Capture and Storage

M14. Ms Notley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence sent to the government between January 1, 2008, and February 10, 2009, from businesses and nongovernmental organizations regarding the government's funding of carbon capture and storage technology.

**Ms Notley:** Of course, the reason for that is that, as you can imagine, not dissimilar from some of the previous points that we've made, this government insists on expending \$2 billion of taxpayers' money on this very unproven technology. That's a huge amount of money at a time when all members in this House are aware that funds are getting a little on the tight side. One has to ask why we're going ahead and whether it's really the best use of our money. Part of having that discussion is to know what in heaven's name generated this in the first place. It does seem to be such a little bit of a Hail Mary PR stunt, frankly, that's more than a little expensive.

Since the program was first announced, of course, we've had pretty much every major player in the tar sands back away from proceeding with this technology or taking part or taking advantage of this funding pot.

Of course, we know that while right now the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions is without question coal-fired electricity generation, we also know that the fastest growth of greenhouse gas emissions is actually occurring within the tar sands. As such, if we're going to move forward and if this government wants us to continue to plan – I believe their future energy plan anticipates us having our economy built entirely in and around the tar sands for the next 50 years, yet this carbon capture storage technology: no one there is really interested in moving forward with it right now. Moreover, most people will say that the technology does not exist at this point to have an appreciable impact on greenhouse gas emission within the tar sands. It potentially – a very slim potential – could have some impact with electricity-generating coal plants but not in this area of the economy, where the government anticipates its primary economic engine to be situated for the next 50 or 60 years.

So the question then becomes: is this really a good use of our money? We know that there have been a variety of cases across the world where in most cases the private sector has backed away from engaging in the introduction of this type of technology because they see it as being far too expensive and, more importantly, simply not the most cost-effective way to address greenhouse gas emissions. They have all determined that there are far more cost-effective ways to deal with greenhouse gas emissions. It's only here, where this government sees its primary economic engine being development of

the tar sands for the next five or six decades, that they don't want to acknowledge that reality. Yet the irony is that the technology is not even there for that particular part of the sector.

All that being said, \$2 billion is a lot – a lot – of money. There is a tremendous lack of clarity or openness on the part of this government in terms of how they're going to administer that money, how they're going to prioritize the expenditure of that money, how that money is going to be partnered with private money, what the measures are, what it is they expect to get for that \$2 billion. I mean, it's just all pie in the sky PR spin, frankly, at this point. We think that Albertans need to know more and that one way for them to know more is to receive information that the government has received in the last 13 months regarding the efficacy of carbon capture and storage technology, both in terms of its scientific efficacy as well as its environmental efficacy, and the degree of interest being articulated within and from within the business community in Alberta.

Now, once again, of course, everyone is going to say, "Oh, well, this was correspondence to the government" and all that kind of stuff, but I think that it is still possible to go through that information and provide much more than currently has been provided while maintaining confidentiality where necessary, or where the person sending that information deems it's necessary, and in some cases they may not deem that it's even necessary that their name not be attached to it. This is something that is very critical for Albertans to have access to, this information. We have heard far too much of the issue around competitive advantage and all that kind of thing, and that's why we can never give out information to Albertans. But it seems to me that if we're going to take a \$2 billion pot of money and throw it on the back of a truck and jump on in with it with a big shovel and start shovelling it out, these private corporations and interests are simply going to have to be prepared to be subjected to a more transparent level of scrutiny than we as taxpayers have had access to thus far.

4:20

It is with this background in mind that we are seeking to have this information made public, to once again create an absolutely unprecedented level of transparency for all Albertans with respect to how it is that this government came up with their \$2 billion plan to throw this money out the door to a bunch of people, most of whom apparently don't seem that interested in receiving it, for reasons that the experts outside of Alberta will simply agree to disagree on with respect to how effective it ultimately will be. As Albertans we have a right to know how and why the government decided to make this project the centrepiece of its so-called efforts to immunize Alberta's abhorrent environmental record from international scrutiny. I don't, of course, think that it's going to be successful, but I am certainly interested in knowing how it was that the government came to the conclusion that they thought it might be.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's quite interesting, in fact, that the member opposite and, most certainly, other members of her party and, I'm presuming, the people that her party represents in the province of Alberta appear to know so much about carbon capture and storage, seem to be so opposed to the opportunity for Albertans to engage themselves in something that the United Nations, the International Energy Agency, the European Union, individual countries like Holland and the U.K. and Norway, certainly our own Canadian federal government, and now the new administration in the United States have been so very supportive of.



Mr. Speaker, I need to say just a word while I'm here, you know, about the situation around the Aspen award that the government of Alberta has just very recently received for our work on carbon capture and storage.

We've given consideration to this motion and the proper notification to the Assembly that we're recommending to our members that this motion be rejected. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we're seeing a trend among these motions, particularly some of the ones we're dealing with now, that could possibly be interpreted as an attempt to bypass our freedom of information route. Certainly, while that might make sense under some circumstances, I would suggest that in this specific case the FOIP process is essential. I say this because the member is not looking for the government's information per se but is requesting all public correspondence received from businesses and nongovernmental organizations related to carbon capture and storage funding. Perhaps the member is seeking information on both expressions of interest and other information that we've collected from the industrial sector or vying for a portion of the money that we have funded for CCS.

Our concern here is that it would be inappropriate for the province to release that information without permission of all third parties who have submitted it. That's why we have the FOIP process, Mr. Speaker, so the member can go through appropriate channels and obtain that permission. I'm not involved in that process whatsoever, and it's administered effectively by my department staff based on the legislation we have in place.

I might suggest one other possibility for the member. As you may or may not be aware, the Alberta Energy website has posted the names of companies who have been asked to submit full project CCS proposals. If there is an interest in more information about these projects, it would be simpler to call these companies directly.

To reiterate, Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place for the member to request the information, and I recommend that all members reject this motion. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there any other member who wishes to speak on the motion?

Seeing, none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to close the debate.

**Ms Notley:** I would just rise very briefly to make the point that the companies from whom we might be requesting this information are not spending \$2 billion of my money, so their obligation to give that information to me is ever so slightly different than the government's obligation to give that to me, and it appears to me that members of this government have very much lost touch with that fact.

Once again, it's \$2 billion, and we'd like to know just a little bit more about it. We have not received anywhere nearly an adequate amount of information from this government, and it's for this reason that, I believe, members of the Assembly would benefit from having this information provided broadly to us all.

[Motion for a Return 14 lost]

#### Nuclear Power

M15. Ms Notley on behalf of Mr. Mason moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence between Bruce Power and the government regarding proposals for nuclear power in Alberta for the time period between January 1, 2006, and February 10, 2009.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. As members of this House know from a brief exchange last week, we in the NDP caucus remain very, very concerned about the transparency with respect to the issue of nuclear power being considered for introduction into Alberta. We certainly know this.

Last week we, of course, asked for the minister to commit to open, public hearings to which any Albertan could go, that would be open for people to hear what each other has to say; for there to be an open exchange of views; if necessary, if they were interested, for the media to be there. We were told, very ironically, that people who are interested are free to "attend the website." Last time I checked with most Albertans, as much as we're all becoming increasingly tech savvy, open, well-informed, respectful exchanges of ideas and debate do not occur at the website. In fact, they occur with open meetings, where people can hear each other's exchanges and participate and learn from each other and respond to what people have to say and where people proposing a certain idea are held accountable in a public way for what it is they are proposing.

Clearly, that is something which remains elusive to the people of Alberta as it relates to the issue of nuclear power. You know, it's very concerning because meanwhile we have Bruce Power, which seems to have been able to put roughly \$50 million into their whole project to get nuclear power introduced into Alberta. It seems to me they wouldn't have done that without there being just a little bit of conversation with the government beforehand.

We have a government which purports to tell us that they're just putting together a neutral panel to tell us what the facts are. Then they appoint a panel that does not include environmentalists or public health experts with experience in this area but, rather, simply includes people who are advocates for nuclear power. They create that panel. The panel comes out with a report which concludes, among other things, that the waste issues around nuclear power are nowhere near as problematic as some of the environmental hazards associated with wind power. We then move into this process where we all get to attend a website for public consultation.

4:30

Nuclear power, notwithstanding the government's very cavalier approach to it and their very dismissive approach to the concerns experienced by many, many Albertans, is both expensive and dangerous. There's nothing green about nuclear energy plants. They are not renewable sources of energy; they are a nonrenewable source of energy. They create greenhouse gas emissions. They also create, as we've discussed, waste problems, which nobody has figured out how to deal with.

Most importantly – well, not most importantly; they're all very important. But another point is that, of course, they're incredibly, incredibly expensive. So we have again another sort of panacea coming from the government. If it's not \$2 billion on carbon capture and storage, well, then we're going to embark upon a plan with respect to nuclear power that has never done anything other than cost taxpayers hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

As I say, it seems as though the deck is stacked, and Albertans, of course, deserve the opportunity to know the degree to which the deck is stacked. It is not very easy to believe that there has been no correspondence or conversation between Bruce Power and government representatives when it comes to the issue of the advisability of investing \$50 million to try and get a nuclear plant in place in Alberta. For that reason, we think there's information that we're not receiving. Once again, as is a common theme with this government, while there is information that we're not receiving, there is much

more effort in ensuring that we don't receive it. It is for that reason that we would like to have the information that has been exchanged between Bruce Power and the government of Alberta made public and provided to all members of this Assembly so that we can more clearly analyze where this project is at and what the various rationales are for proceeding with this and why it is that the government has managed this issue in the way that they have to this point, to date.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I do have to rise with some comments relative to what's being said here. This is kind of a déjà vu thing again with this motion, similar to the last one. But something about this I think requires a bit of rebuttal because the member is talking here about something that happened in the House relative to question period. You know, she talks about public debate. I agree that public debate is a good forum. Public debate is one thing, but I do have to say that in certain circumstances, where public harassment and public intimidation take place, that's quite another thing.

This member has indicated that what we've done here is not give Albertans an opportunity to be involved in this process. That's wrong. She has very interestingly indicated that there would be select people that would be allowed in focus groups. There was nothing of the sort, Mr. Speaker, in any of the things that we said. We said that the people would be selected randomly by an independent third party, no select people. I think that when you imply something like that, it's unfortunate that Albertans, you know, get misled by some of those types of comments that are very seriously flawed. All Albertans will have an opportunity with respect to this particular issue, and it's another, I think, situation that can be interpreted as an attempt to use the rules of the Assembly to bypass the FOIP process. I would suggest that the same principle applies to Motion for a Return 15 as it did for 14.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a point of reiterating that the Premier has committed that we will not be developing a policy position on the topic of nuclear power until we have public input. The report from the panel is now available, and its content is fact based and neutral. I've also announced the process through which we will gather feedback from Albertans. When it comes to this specific request, again, involving third-party information, I would suggest there's a process administered by the department's FOIP office and currently available to the member. For that reason, I encourage members to reject this motion.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Two statements. Before this government leads Alberta down the nuclear road of controversial return, I am hoping that this government will conduct a province-wide plebiscite so that each Albertan of voting age has an opportunity to state through a voting process whether they believe this is the route to go. Obviously, before we get to such a plebiscite, if we should ever arrive at such a plebiscite, it is extremely important that this government provide Albertans with the greatest amount of information so that they can make a judgment based not only on emotion but on science.

This first request is one of many that will come forward asking this government to lay their cards on the table and give Albertans a sense of the direction that they're heading and recommending.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to close the debate.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. I'll just be very brief about this. There have been a couple of times now where the requests for motions for returns or even written questions have been responded to by the government saying that members of this House have access to a FOIP process. Now, I'm certainly not an expert in House procedure, but I'm pretty sure that the process of motions for returns and written questions are ones that long preceded the freedom of information process. They are processes which members of the Legislative Assembly, through our being members of the Assembly, through our having been elected by eligible voters in the province, have access to. It's a process that we have an access to that average Albertans, unfortunately, do not have access to. Those people, unfortunately, are compelled to go through the FOIP process.

Now, as this minister well knows, pretty much every FOIP request these days comes back with a cost estimate which makes it functionally impossible for anyone trying to consistently get information out of this government to do so without a grand budget the size of – oh, I don't know – the carbon capture and storage fund or something like that.

Nonetheless, the introduction of the FOIP legislation was never done to somehow negate our rights as members of this Assembly to use procedures within the Assembly which have been ours for hundreds of years as a result of parliamentary procedure. So I have to say that I'm quite concerned that somehow there seems to be an argument evolving here that we are going to now just arbitrarily eliminate the rights of elected members of this Assembly to exercise the ability to gain information from the government through a parliamentary process. One thing has nothing to do with the other, as far as I'm concerned. It is simply, I would suggest, not a legitimate ground for suggesting that information that we request be turned down.

4:40

Again, this is not just something that impacts on this little opposition over here. All members of this Assembly have this right, and it should be quite important that all members of this Assembly, even those who are not part of the inner circle, want to maintain their ability to gain access to this information as a result of the rights that flow to them by being a member of the Assembly. So I would suggest that it's not just us that needs to be worried about this trend.

Thank you very much.

[Motion for a Return 15 lost]

#### School Construction Financing Audit

M17. Ms Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the independent audit of the financing method being used for the construction of schools in Calgary referred to in the Assembly by the Minister of Education during Oral Question Period on Wednesday, November 7, 2007.

**Ms Notley:** I appreciate that this is a somewhat old reference. Nonetheless, on November 7, 2007, the Minister of Education and the now Minister for Health and Wellness mentioned an external review that took place in the summer of 2007 which compared the traditional model for building schools to the "design, build, finance, and maintain model." The minister mentioned this external review in the House but did not table the document, and the issue is still

relevant today, so it's very important that we make the audits that the minister referred to public.

Albertans need the proof that they are not being misled about the actual costs of these projects. As we mentioned with respect to debate around Motion 12, we subsequently had a roughly \$650 million to \$700 million announcement to proceed with a public-private financing initiative in Calgary, and I believe that that was premised on this audit, which the Minister of Education referred to in November of 2007.

Once again, for the reasons that were discussed in our debate around Motion for a Return 12, we believe that it would be of value to members of the Assembly as well as to Albertans, who elected us to be here, that we get access to this audit referred to by the Minister of Education in the House in November of 2007.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure to urge members to reject this motion. The November 7, 2007, reference by the Minister of Education during question period relates to a review by an independent project financial evaluation team, consisting of financial advisers, financial market advisers, and transactions advisers. The minister advises me that releasing this information could interfere with the government's contractual or other negotiations.

I also remind all members once again, as I did in comments to an earlier motion, that the Auditor General initiated an audit of this process in March of 2009, and that audit will include a review of the financing method. Once again, I remind members that that report is expected this October.

I would like to advise the member that upon release of the Auditor General's report, the Minister of Infrastructure would be pleased to sit down with the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to answer any outstanding questions that she might have. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I recommend and urge members to reject Motion for a Return 17.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does any member wish to speak on the motion for a return?

Seeing none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to close.

**Ms Notley:** Question.

[Motion for a Return 17 lost]

### Green Transit Incentives Program

M18. Ms Notley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all proposals, project timelines, and government objectives relating to the green transit incentives program, Green TRIP, initiative for the time period of January 1, 2008, to February 10, 2009.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Yes. This request originated as a result of the July 2008 announcement of the government to make a \$2 billion commitment to fund the expansion of local, regional, and intercity public transit across the province. At the time the plan was that the program would focus on initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions and the number of vehicles on Alberta roads. Unfortunately, though, in

the third-quarter fiscal update in February the fund was reduced from \$2 billion to \$195 million. Of course, we've often been told that that was never actually reduced. I'm not sure if it's because the \$2 billion was not something that we should have ever relied on or that when they said \$2 billion, we should have understood that that meant \$2 billion over an undetermined amount of years in the future.

Nonetheless, while this reduction has occurred from \$2 billion to \$195 million, the government has maintained its commitment to subsidizing carbon capture and storage technology. Our interest was in finding out some of the initiatives that had been in the government's sightline when they first announced the Green TRIP program so that we could perhaps engage in a comparison in terms of the value to the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions between the \$2 billion carbon capture and storage experiment versus what was the \$2 billion Green TRIP program. That is the rationale behind this request for information to the government.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the Minister of Transportation. The member has asked for copies of all proposals, project timelines, and government objectives relating to the green transit incentives program initiative for the time period of January 1, 2008, to February 10, 2009. The minister assures me that he will have no problem providing the hon. member with plenty of information about the Green TRIP program when it is finalized.

As the member knows, this is a program that was announced last July. Since then there has been frequent consultation between both the department and stakeholders from across the province to determine exactly how the criteria should be structured. This includes consultations with municipalities about the timelines for the program and the most appropriate funding criteria. Work is now under way with all of our municipal partners to reach a consensus before any move forward to the next phase of the program.

The Minister of Transportation assures me that he would be happy to provide the hon. member with information about timelines, projects, and program goals once they have been established. But at this point the minister has not received any formal proposals from any of the regional groups that they've been working with, so it's not possible to provide the information to the hon. member.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to reject this motion.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Just to make sure it's firmly on the record, the Alberta Liberal caucus supports the notion of carbon sequestration. While it's a large amount of money in the form of \$2 billion, we hope that it will kick-start a process which over the years will be of great benefit to Albertans.

We share the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's concerns about the lack of information with regard to the Green TRIP. The Green TRIP can be put into place considerably faster than the carbon sequestration because much of the infrastructure already exists. For example, the railroad tracks from High River into Calgary or from Cochrane into Calgary already exist. The side lines for rerouting commercial traffic while passenger traffic gets a priority already exist, so it's a matter of co-ordination with the municipalities, of using existing equipment in terms of rail that we currently have and upgrading.

In terms of which project can come most quickly and provide the

most immediate benefit, I would suggest that the Green TRIP will provide the immediate returns, and the carbon sequestration will provide the long-term returns.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, to conclude the debate.

**Ms Notley:** Question.

[Motion for a Return 18 lost]

### Carbon Emission Reduction

M19. Ms Notley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all government research on technologies designed to reduce carbon emissions that were conducted between January 1, 2006, and February 10, 2009.

**Ms Notley:** A good deal of the rationale for this request has already been discussed under other motions. However, as we have mentioned, the government has decided to make a significant \$2 billion investment into carbon capture and storage. What is of interest here is the degree to which the government may have looked at other technologies which are designed to reduce carbon emissions before making this decision or, alternatively, while not designed to reduce carbon emissions, have as their consequences the reduction of carbon emissions.

We'd like to know what evidence the government has that shows that carbon capture technology is, in fact, a completely viable technology worthy of such a large investment. We, of course, know that there is, without question, some investment going on in other jurisdictions, but on a per capita basis Alberta's investment is probably close to unprecedented. It would make sense, then, that we would have a lot more information put out to us with respect to what the government had to consider before making this investment, not only the information suggesting that it's viable but also the information suggesting that it might not be viable, so that we can determine whether it was a balanced assessment, one that ultimately one supports or one that we think may have been made rashly or without thought to the financial responsibility that we have to Albertans.

As well, there is, of course, the issue of comparing it to other initiatives that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I would suspect that the government would have had a fair amount of information at its disposal about the most effective way to bring down the greenhouse gas emissions coming from our province, either through industry or through the public, before making this kind of prioritized investment in carbon capture and storage. This is the information that we don't have before us yet. Again, this issue is not going to go away. It's an issue that is going to continue to feature prominently in our public policy debate for years and years and decades to come. It is important, then, that we know where the government is in terms of evaluating the relative merits of different greenhouse gas emission strategies at its disposal.

Really, that is what this request is going for. It's going for: what did the government have at its fingertips in the course of making and reaching these conclusions, making these decisions to spend this money on carbon capture and storage and not, for instance, on Green TRIP or whatever other initiatives but, rather, to spend it there? What information was at the fingertips of the government when it made that decision? You know, this is not a question that's going to go away either. I suspect that because the issue is so top of mind

and the science is developing, there will probably be more information that will come to the government for additional consideration a year from now or throughout the next year, and we would want to know what that information is as well.

Frankly, the position on it and the consensus as to what is the best way to address this issue is going to evolve not only because science evolves and industry evolves but also because developments in other jurisdictions evolve. So as we go through that process, it would make sense, then, that the deliberations of the government, particularly the cabinet, and the documents upon which those deliberations are premised be made available to all Albertans so that we can engage in this.

The protection of the environment is of critical importance to Albertans. The way in which that balances against our economic development is also of critical importance to Albertans. The degree to which we devote \$2 billion, obviously not in one year, but that amount of money is, of course, also of critical importance to Albertans. Again, members of the Assembly, I hate to harp on it, but if we're going to really sort of do our job for the people that elected us, we should be asking for this information so that we have the opportunity to evaluate it and to involve Albertans in that discussion if they would like to be involved. It's for that reason that we are pursuing this information. We will probably continue to pursue it because I expect that to the information that would be available to us right now there would be more added a year from now, and that's fine, but we should be able to see what's there at this point.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. The motion asks for copies of all government research on technologies designed to reduce carbon emissions that was conducted between January 1, 2006, and February 10, 2009. It's widely known that Alberta has globally recognized researchers leading the development of carbon reduction technology at the Alberta Research Council, the University of Alberta, and the University of Calgary as well as a number of other research institutions throughout the province.

The government strongly supports the development of such technology through the Alberta Energy Research Institute, or AERI, and new initiatives such as the \$2 billion carbon capture and storage fund, the climate change and emissions management fund, and the innovative energy technologies program. Government-supported projects have a confidentiality period to allow the project sponsors enough time to protect the new intellectual property generated by these projects, many of which are ongoing. After this confidentiality period has expired, the final reports can be obtained through the energy innovation platform of Alberta database. The website, for anyone who wishes to have a look at it, is [eipa.alberta.ca](http://eipa.alberta.ca).

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge members to reject Motion for a Return 19.

**Ms Notley:** I would simply rise to say that while that information is of assistance, we weren't simply looking at information that was created or generated by the Alberta government itself but rather that which was at its disposal and which entered into its consideration or deliberations with respect to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. So I think that we could use more information.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 19 lost]

## 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

### Low-speed Vehicles

505. Mr. Elniski moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce amendments to the Traffic Safety Act to permit the use of low-speed vehicles on roads with a posted speed limit of up to 60 kilometres per hour.

**Mr. Elniski:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in this Assembly today and begin debate on Motion 505, which urges this government to permit the use of low-speed vehicles, or LSVs, on Alberta's public roads with a maximum speed limit of up to 60 kilometres an hour. While the debate on this issue is somewhat contentious, I believe it is beneficial for this Assembly to discuss what LSVs are and how they can contribute positively to the lifestyles of Albertans. These vehicles would provide an environmentally friendly transportation alternative for Albertans with short-distance, inner-city travel needs.

Mr. Speaker, low-speed vehicles are relatively new to the North American market, and as such it is probable that they are unfamiliar to some of my colleagues. In short, they are electrically powered vehicles that do not require conventional fuels. Instead, once the vehicle's battery is depleted, it is simply recharged by plugging it into a standard household outlet. A refill typically costs around 40 cents. These vehicles are powered by a rechargeable electric battery and do not produce any emissions. With a limited top speed threshold of up to 60 kilometres an hour LSVs are intended primarily for closed-course activity or lower-speed urban roadways. We cannot take these vehicles and place them on the highways alongside high-speed vehicles, and this is not what Motion 505 urges our government to do.

This technology proposes financial and environmental benefits for all Albertans and for our province. First, low-speed vehicles would provide Albertans with a significant long-term savings as they do not require gasoline or any other form of energy. Furthermore, the cost of the vehicle itself is competitive in comparison to other small vehicles. Essentially the upfront cost of the vehicle is inexpensive, and the maintenance and long-term fuel costs are nearly nonexistent as the vehicle does not utilize an engine or have a significant number of moving parts.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that these vehicles would be an ideal solution for those who commute within our cities. As most members of this Assembly know, I currently own and drive a Smart car. It is a practical, compact, and efficient means for everyday travel. It parks very well, scoots in and out of traffic, and is quite quick. Well, it's just quick enough. Although a Smart car serves a similar purpose, a more environmentally friendly option exists with the electric-powered LSV, and it would also have room for my golf clubs. This option would not only benefit me but thousands of fellow Albertans with modest transportation needs, the most prevalent, of course, being seniors. Many seniors have short-range travel needs and could save money on refueling costs.

Should this Assembly pass Motion 505, it would encourage this government to join numerous other jurisdictions within Canada and North America. In today's *Edmonton Journal*, Mr. Speaker, it was well identified that red tape is really the roadblock, not consumer demand.

There is hope. In June of 2006 the government of British Columbia amended its Motor Vehicle Act to include a definition for a neighbourhood zero emission vehicle, or an NZEV. The legisla-

tion permits the use of these vehicles on a highway with a posted speed limit of up to 40 kilometres an hour or less, or if authorized by the minister of transportation, up to 50 kilometres an hour. In August of 2008 the district of Oak Bay became the first British Columbia municipality to authorize the use of LSVs on its streets. Following this, Vancouver city council enacted legislation to permit the use of NZEVs on roads with speeds of up to 50 kilometres per hour, making Vancouver the first major Canadian city to do so.

Other provinces have also initiated pilot programs to test the feasibility of LSV use. In July of 2008 the Ontario government launched a five-year pilot program to help determine the appropriate safety standards for LSVs so that they may be used on Ontario roads. Due to the safety concerns associated with LSVs, the Ontario government only permits these vehicles in Ontario parks and conservation areas, which nonetheless is still a step in the right direction.

In 2008 the government of Quebec announced the launch of a three-year pilot program to study low-speed vehicles. The purpose of that program is to test the vehicles on certain public roads, develop traffic safety rules for the vehicles, and establish norms with regard to the safety equipment for LSVs. This program permits the vehicles that participate in the program to operate on roads with speed limits of up to 50 kilometres an hour. They must exceed the standards for low-speed vehicles set by Transport Canada, and the cars must include, in addition to other things, windshield wipers, a defrosting and heating system, three-point seatbelts, and a horn.

The United States has also implemented legislation for the use of LSVs in 40 states. For example, the state of Montana has legislation that permits vehicles on the roads at speeds of up to 45 miles per hour. Other states such as Wisconsin have passed legislation that permit its municipalities to govern the use of LSVs within their borders.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Alberta should join these jurisdictions in promoting the use of these vehicles. Doing so would promote Canadian business at a time of economic uncertainty. Canadian corporations are the leaders in the development of low-speed vehicles, such as the ZENN Motor Company headquartered in Toronto or Dynasty motors headquartered in Vancouver.

I understand that several members have expressed their concerns with regard to the safety features of these vehicles. I cannot argue the fact nor can we legislate against physics, Mr. Speaker, that says that if an LSV is hit by an SUV, the LSV will certainly come out second best. Risk exists in any vehicle we operate, but with risk comes basic levels of protection. For a cyclist or a motorcyclist the first form of protection is the helmet; for LSVs it is the seatbelt and safety glass; for high-speed vehicles it is cabin integrity, primary and secondary restraint systems, and electronic vehicle stability control. In all cases, the universal goal is to prevent accidents from occurring. In the case that an accident does occur, features must be in place to minimize the damage to the occupants. I believe that we can work with LSV manufacturers to implement the appropriate safety standards for these vehicles in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my colleagues to support Motion 505 because it would provide an inexpensive form of transportation for Albertans and continue to promote our dedication to a healthy environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. I stand in support of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder and his desire to move us towards a greener transportation system. Previously in our motions for returns

we talked about the government initiative of the Green TRIP. This is one way of individuals getting an opportunity to participate in a green trip experience of their own.

This past January I had an opportunity to visit a brother-in-law and sister-in-law who were leasing a wonderful spot at a golf course in Sun City in Palm Desert. It surprised me that local shopping centres in Palm Springs and Palm Desert had designated golf cart parking spots. In fact, I stopped to take pictures of these because I'd never seen anything like it off a golf course.

The technology exists, and incorporating it and, obviously, licensing, both in terms of licensing the vehicle and licensing the driver – whether it's a lower speed vehicle or not, safety has to extend beyond just the proper type of signal lights, the proper type of horn, the proper type of seat belts. We cannot lull ourselves into the thought that less road safety or training is required for these vehicles because if they can obtain speeds of up to 60 kilometres an hour, they can do a significant amount of damage to pedestrians and to property. Obviously, that licensing is going to be an important part of the conversation.

I remember in my broke high school days how the kids who were, basically, one step above the bicycle were those that drove their moped, pedal motorcycles, to school. Of course, they were shunned by the people who had the Yamaha 300s or the Honda dream bikes at that time. The moped has now transformed itself into an electrical bicycle/cycle as one of the LSV prototypes. So getting people off of a nonrenewable resource, gas and oil, and saving the gas and oil for larger concerns – transportation of goods, the heating of homes, conserving as well as preserving our environment – are both wonderful considerations that LSVs would provide.

5:10

Also when I was down in the States, I saw a variety of individuals from police officers to mailmen using this type of two-wheeled vehicle to great effect. The idea that they can be recharged potentially with the use of green power, whether it be from hydro or whether it be from wind power, whether it be from solar in the sense that the energy can be stored and recharged in battery form, is a tremendous innovation for a world that has been so reliant on oil and gas revenue and, as I say, will continue to be reliant in a number of areas. If we can conserve in this particular area, I think it would be of tremendous value.

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder pointed out, there are still dangers associated with this type of vehicle. In terms of the pecking order, as he pointed out, his Smart car would win in a jousting competition between an LSV and a Smart car. Mind you, he's very well aware that his Smart car would come out second best with any regular vehicle. We have to make sure that the safety regulations, the licensing, the instruction, the expectations, from eye exams to demonstrating capabilities of operating these vehicles, must be maintained. But I commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder for bringing us further into the 21st century, talking about conservation, talking about a combination of electrical vehicular transportation.

One area that I would just like to conclude with is that we would hope as the Alberta Liberal opposition to be moving the government towards the compromise between the LSVs and the gas-operated vehicles, and that is obviously the hybrid, where you rely not only on gasoline but you also have an electric component to your vehicle. I realize that technology hasn't advanced to the point where you could have, for example, a conservation officer out patrolling a forestry road miles and miles from his station, and therefore there still is a place for regular vehicles and three-quarter ton trucks to haul the equipment and so on, but this low-speed vehicle is definitely a jolt, a bolt in the right direction.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that I have to try to set the record straight here a little bit. I believe that the hon. member had some very, very good intentions to urge the government to do this, but we first have to have an understanding on what LSVs are. There is a difference between an LSV [interjections] and a car that actually meets all of the national safety codes or national safety standards.

There are well over 40 regulations and standards to meet on cars to be able to be registered for the streets or the roads in Canada. Most LSVs only have three of those codes. One is a vehicle identification number. Most LSVs are glorified golf carts, Mr. Speaker. Transport Canada has done a crash test with them and found them to be very, very unsafe if you put them into traffic with regular type vehicles. We have absolutely no problem with letting people register vehicles for the road that meet all the safety standards that are required in Alberta today.

This is a motion urging the government to look at this. In fact, we have two pilot projects going on in the province of Alberta right now, one in the Jasper townsite because there are no roads in the Jasper townsite over 40 kilometres an hour. We have a test pilot going, allowing these on the road. I understand that in the winter with some of the different models, because of the type of features they have, they've had problems. As soon as they let off – I can't call it the gas – the electronic throttle, I guess, the accelerator, it locks up the back wheels, and the thing goes into spins.

The hon. member mentioned that he drove a Smart car. It may be as small as some of these LSVs, but it meets all the safety criteria required to be on the roads in Alberta. What we're saying is that you can't turn vehicles that are not designed with the safety features into the same traffic volume as the others. Some of these LSVs will go as high as 70 kilometres an hour, but for most of them the top speed is around 40 to 45, and they're just not safe in speed limits over that. They're not really safe to be mixing in with the other large traffic.

Because we're already doing the pilot project, because we're trying to look at every different situation we can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – that's why we have Green TRIP coming forward, Mr. Speaker – I would urge this House to say, no, no, no, not till we get safety. There's no reason to have brought this forward to even look at. I would urge all the hon. members in this House to think of safety, safety for all Albertans, and defeat this motion.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay. All right. I totally can understand the minister coming from the safety point of view, and certainly it's something to consider, but I would like to commend the mover of this motion to even get this discussion going. We have to think big; we have to think forward. Every time I drive in from the airport, I see that mess at 23rd Avenue, whatever it is, where they're trying to put in the interchange that probably should have been put in when they had to go out and build South Common or whatever it was. I mean, it's small, small thinking. We've got to think big.

We have to think that in the future we will have electric cars, we will have electric bicycles, we will have all these kinds of things, so why aren't we thinking ahead and looking at our transportation corridors and putting in an area where these particular vehicles would be safe? All we're doing is building roads for cars that are going to go a hundred clicks in an 80-mile-an-hour zone or you don't get where you want to go. I mean, even highway 2. I know we've got our sheriffs out, but if you still don't go 140, you're not

going anywhere on highway 2. I think this is really good, forward thinking and needs to be discussed.

I don't know how many people have had the opportunity to actually travel in Europe. I have been privileged to do that. You see these little cars. Unfortunately, they do park on the sidewalks in Paris, and you have to walk around them; same in Italy. Rome is atrocious. But at least they move around.

Granted, their city streets, particularly in the older sections – well, Rome is probably about 2,000 years old, their section downtown. The streets are narrow, and they don't move as fast as we move our traffic here in North America, but they do have areas for small cars. They do have areas for bicycles. I mean, obviously, the perfect example is Holland, where at the stop signs and at the traffic lights the bicycles certainly outnumber the cars. They accommodate that sort of forward thinking.

5:20

I want to commend the member again because it is forward thinking. It is going to have to come. We've got to start thinking of our transportation corridors and how they can accommodate, clearly, what will be the environmental way of moving around safely.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a day at the Alberta Legislature: the Minister of Transportation talking about LSD and the Minister of Environment about the Green TRIP and pot-smoking advocates outside, and here we're talking about little cars. But the Member for Edmonton-Calder should be commended for the motion.

Let's face it: for those who are not familiar with the process of the Legislature, of Parliaments, motions are not binding on government. All they are is a means of instigating discussion, a conversation among elected members and the population at large. I think the time has come to look at alternative forms of transportation not only for environmental reasons, which are sound reasons, but also simply for our ability to move people through congested cities.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if a safe electric or any other environmentally friendly vehicle was developed, it would definitely make a great addition as a second vehicle to my family. I live at a very odd location where I cannot walk to a local grocery store. I cannot even walk to pick up a cup of coffee because I'm in suburbia. It's too far to walk, but it's really too close to drive. It's just a few minutes' drive. Individuals would be able to use such vehicles for short shopping trips, dropping off kids at a game, or whatever it is that they do within their immediate neighbourhoods. So I commend the Member for Edmonton-Calder for at least bringing this discussion forward.

There may not be a vehicle at this time on the market that meets our standards. The Minister of Transportation definitely makes some valid points. We cannot legalize vehicles on roads that simply will create carnage and put Albertans at risk and peril. But we should let the world know that Alberta is open to welcome and introduce vehicles on the road as long as they meet our environmental and our safety standards. I think Albertans are ready to at least consider it.

Mr. Speaker, I imagine that 15 years ago, if one was to sit on a Vespa and ride one through the city, there would be some chuckles and laughs. Now they have become a fashion statement, and Vespas are selling like hotcakes throughout urban Alberta. I'm not sure about rural Alberta. My colleague the minister – I guess not. Harleys are still the preference in rural Alberta, but one can be cool and respected riding a Vespa in Edmonton right now. So I think that

pretty soon a safe electric, slow-moving vehicle will be acceptable in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I have a list of people who wish to speak here, so I will recognize, following this list, the hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of Motion 505 on low-speed vehicles, and I commend my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder for bringing this forward.

While there are some concerns over the safety of low-speed vehicles on public roads, there are possibly some restrictions that could go along with their use to alleviate these concerns so that the environmentally friendly method of travel could be a viable option. While the current motion allows for low-speed vehicles on roads with posted speed limits of 60 kilometres per hour, I would encourage the government to explore 50 kilometres an hour as a maximum speed for the vehicle itself to increase safety in addition to, perhaps, a few other limitations.

At least initially, Mr. Speaker, I would propose that the government set up a pilot project, and I'm pleased to hear that the government has set up a pilot project. I wasn't aware of that. But to pose a few further limitations, firstly, I would suggest that they only be allowed in towns with a population of, perhaps, less than 5,000 and that they only be allowed initially during daylight hours. I would also be inclined to make their use subject to municipal approval, control, and regulation. In that way, the people who are closest to the situation and who will be aware of the safety concerns and who will be able to monitor it the best will be fully in charge.

Mr. Speaker, by giving people a choice to use low-speed vehicles in such a manner, we're offering them an alternative that is both inexpensive and low in emissions without compromising safety. As people are becoming increasingly aware of the financial and environmental impact of their daily actions, I think it is important for the government to explore creative ways of offering citizens more options where they can.

Now, we're not the first jurisdiction to explore the use of low-speed vehicles on public roads, as the mover has indicated. We can learn from how it has worked in other jurisdictions to develop our own regulation and implementation system that is good for the province of Alberta and particularly our weather conditions.

I salute the hon. Minister of Transportation for setting up the pilot projects. A pilot project in a small town or a few small towns could be a good way of seeing how low-speed vehicles might work in our communities and if it can be further implemented in the whole province.

Just an aside, Mr. Speaker, speaking of glorified golf carts, around 20 years ago in a small town in southern Alberta of – I don't know – 3,000 to 4,000 my father was given special approval to use his golf cart to drive from his home to the golf course, which was about five to six blocks away. As far as I know, there were never any problems with that. I'm sure it was fairly closely monitored by the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, I have some cautionary reservations about the wholesale use of low-speed vehicles, but I do support their use in principle. It's somewhat ironic that we have heavy restrictions for four-wheeled low-speed vehicles, yet we don't have any similar restrictions on two-wheeled vehicles.

In this context I urge the government to investigate this matter further. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Motion 505, which urges the government to amend the Traffic Safety Act to permit the use of low-speed vehicles on roads with a posted limit of 60 kilometres or less. Such an amendment would be an inexpensive, zero-emission alternative method of transportation for Albertans. Essentially, low-speed vehicles are electrically powered vehicles that utilize batteries rather than a motor engine, no carbon emissions, capable of reaching speeds up to 40 kilometres an hour.

It could mean a variety of benefits for Albertans, especially for those in urban areas. Primarily these LSVs would offer consumers an affordable option for transportation. For instance, the ZENN Motor Company, mentioned earlier, a Canadian manufacturer of low-speed vehicles, offers the 2009 ZENN LSV starting at just \$15,995. It sounds like I'm in my previous life here, for a second. The figure compares favourably with a number of entry-level vehicles currently listed on the market. In addition, LSVs require no gasoline or any other form of fuel, so this could mean significant savings for Albertans over the life of the vehicle.

**An Hon. Member:** It's the warranty.

**Mr. Quest:** It's the warranty.

Mr. Speaker, because LSVs do not produce any carbon emissions, they also offer an environmentally friendly alternative form of transportation.

The ongoing research and development of low-speed vehicles is also quite compelling. Advancements and improvements are being made at a very fast pace. For instance, in late '09 the ZENN Motor Company plans to introduce a city ZENN, which will utilize the revolutionary ultracapacitor battery. The battery would permit a range of 400 kilometres and a recharging time of five minutes. These advances will make the LSVs even more practical for consumers.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 505 has the transportation interests of Albertans at heart by providing an inexpensive and environmentally friendly alternative to drivers with intracity transportation needs. This government has the opportunity now to significantly expand the transportation horizons available for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta is not alone in considering the usage of LSVs on public roads. As we've heard earlier, actually, from several hon. members, several jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S. have already established legislation and pilot projects for the use of low-speed vehicles, including our own, as previously mentioned by the hon. Minister of Transportation. Similarly, in the United States approximately 40 states have established legislation which permits the use of LSVs on public roads. I'm encouraged to hear the progress being made in other jurisdictions but also believe that it's imperative that we choose a path that's right for Alberta.

5:30

Permitting the use of these vehicles deserves due consideration to ensure that appropriate action is taken. While I've highlighted some of the benefits of these vehicles, I strongly believe that it's important to consider the safety concerns expressed by Transport Canada, which does not recommend the use of LSVs on public roads. First, as outlined earlier by the hon. Minister of Transportation, low-speed vehicles are only required to meet three of the nearly 40 safety category requirements demanded of passenger vehicles in order to be eligible for importation and sale in Canada.

While these vehicles would be limited to roads of speed limits up to 60 kilometres per hour, significant damage could occur to the vehicle and the passengers in the event of an accident. The risk

would be even greater in the event that the driver of the other vehicle was speeding. Indeed, Transport Canada crash tests have confirmed that significant damage can occur to these vehicles in the event of an accident. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the government should proceed with caution in considering these vehicles for use on our roads and for the benefit of all Albertans.

I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder for bringing forward this thoughtful motion. I'll look forward to the rest of the debate. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to spend a few moments to join in on Motion 505, which urges the government to permit the use of low-speed vehicles on roads with a posted speed limit of up to 60 kilometres per hour.

First, I would like to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder for bringing this motion forward. Motion 505 has some very strong aspects to it. It would provide Alberta's drivers with the opportunity to make a choice in their mode of transportation and therefore produce positive economic and environmental effects in those individuals' lives. The freedom to make choices that affect your own life is very important to me. This proposed motion would allow people to make positive choices in two very important aspects of their lives, economic well-being and environmental stewardship.

First, it would allow Albertans the opportunity to travel within urban areas in a cost-efficient manner. The cost of fuel can create an incredible strain on many families in Alberta. As we all know, gasoline is expensive and will most likely continue to be expensive for the foreseeable future; \$300 a month to \$500 a month adds up and could be money in the pockets of Albertans and Alberta families. This would create disposable income and allow Albertans the opportunity to spend their hard-earned money on anything they desire in order to improve their quality of life.

Aside from the economic benefits for everyday Albertans, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk about the environmental benefit that this motion touches on. One of the goals of this government is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, so a move to reduce those emissions in daily commutes is consistent with the approach that the government is already taking.

If this Assembly would indulge me, I would like to speak about the city of Edmonton for a minute since that is the city I know the best. Mr. Speaker, I have lived in Edmonton all my adult life. I have experienced, as I am sure many of my colleagues have, the full force of rush hour traffic. All that stopping and accelerating, all the idling on red lights and traffic jams will add some amount of greenhouse gas emissions. Low-speed vehicles could be a great option for those who are environmentally conscious and want to be able to drive on urban roadways with zero or next to zero emissions.

I know there are already low-cost and low-pollution options within the city. For example, I see many people who ride their bicycles to work every day. However, that option is simply not practical in the wintertime in Alberta. Another option for commuters is using the Edmonton Transit System. I do recognize and appreciate the recent work of the city of Edmonton in expanding the LRT and incorporating more parts of the city into their bus routes, but obviously even public transit cannot reach everyone all the time. So I do believe that there is a need to examine other options for daily commuters within our communities and municipalities.

However, there are some issues with this particular type of vehicle that cannot be overlooked. I am talking about the safety issues. As we have heard, Mr. Speaker, vehicles that are classified as passenger



cars must meet up to 40 safety categories in order to be eligible for importation and sale in Canada under the Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Act. The low-speed vehicles in question meet just three of those safety standards. Some notable omissions are the lack of the need for mirrors, head restraints, occupant protections, and roof intrusion protection.

Now, these vehicles can travel at a maximum of 40 kilometres per hour, maybe 50 with a stiff wind at their back. At that speed the impact of any collision would be substantially less severe than a highway collision, where vehicles continuously travel in excess of 100 kilometres per hour. It doesn't take a mathematician to figure out that if we have one low-speed vehicle travelling 40 kilometres per hour and one truck travelling 60 kilometres an hour, in a head-on collision you would be colliding at 100 kilometres an hour.

As a journeyman mechanic I have seen enough of these collisions to know that even at 40 kilometres per hour a vehicle needs head restraint and occupant protection. I have seen regular-size vehicles damaged beyond repair when they collided with a large truck or a bus. These low-speed vehicles would obviously fare far worse, and the passengers would go from suffering whiplash or a broken leg to something far more serious.

However, Mr. Speaker, the positive impact regarding personal choice and environmental protection that this motion would bring about is more than strong enough to warrant a further look from this government. Therefore, I support this motion so long as these major safety issues are addressed while the regulations are being implemented.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today and speak to Motion 505, which proposes to urge the government to amend the Traffic Safety Act to permit the use of low-speed vehicles, or LSVs, on roads with posted speed limits of 60 kilometres per hour or less.

In doing so, the government of Alberta would permit and promote an inexpensive, zero-emission alternative method of transportation for use on our roads. Because they do not have a gasoline or diesel engine, LSVs do not produce any carbon emissions. This would provide Albertans with an environmentally friendly alternative form of transportation and would fall in line with the government's priority to reduce greenhouse emissions.

Low-speed vehicles would be ideal cars for driving to the grocery store or dropping a son or daughter off at friends', movie theatres, or the mall. Mr. Speaker, having three children of my own, I can speak from my own personal experience on this point. Furthermore, the LSVs could present an inexpensive, viable alternative for drivers with inner-city transportation needs. This would alleviate some of the strain that is placed on our public transit system.

In addition, LSVs would provide an inexpensive mode of transportation to low-income families, many of whom live in Edmonton-Mill Woods, who may not be able to afford a regular car and the expensive cost of refueling. It was not too long ago that gas prices were well over \$1.20 a litre. These high prices made it impossible for many low-income families in my constituency to fill up gas tanks and forced many of them to park the family car. By allowing LSVs on the road, these low-income families would be able to drive their cars for mere pennies a day.

5:40

I would like to point out that many jurisdictions in Canada and

around the world have amended their traffic safety laws to allow low-speed vehicles on their roads. In June 2006 the government of British Columbia amended its Motor Vehicle Act regulations to include the definition of neighbourhood zero-emission vehicles. Municipalities are permitted at their discretion to pass bylaws to permit the use of neighbourhood zero-emission vehicles on public roads with speeds of up to 50 kilometres per hour.

Today the district of Oak Bay and the city of Vancouver have passed such bylaws, permitting these vehicles access to the vast majority of their road networks. Other jurisdictions have launched pilot programs in order to test the suitability of these vehicles on their roads and determine appropriate safety standards. In September 2006 the Ontario government announced a five-year pilot project to permit low-speed vehicles in provincial and municipal parks and conservation areas. More recently, on December 5, 2008, the Ontario government announced that new regulations and guidelines would be released over the course of the winter that would allow the use of low-speed vehicles on provincial roads. Furthermore, in 2008 the government of Quebec announced the launch of a three-year pilot project to study the use of low-speed vehicles on certain public roads and develop safe traffic rules for their use. In the United States 40 states have enacted laws that allow low-speed vehicles to be used on their highways.

Mr. Speaker, by allowing LSVs onto our roads, we would be helping the environment by encouraging alternatives to carbon-emitting vehicles and helping the Alberta government meet its own greenhouse gas reduction targets. It would assist low-income families by alleviating the cost of expensive gasoline fuel, providing more money for essentials such as groceries and clothing.

Even though there is a capacity for this initiative, there are also negatives. Transport Canada, as mentioned by our hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, does not encourage the use of LSVs on public roads as these vehicles are required to meet only three of the nearly 40 safety requirements that are met by passenger vehicles. In fact, recent Transport Canada crash tests have demonstrated that LSVs are, in fact, a safety hazard to drivers.

Even though these vehicles are legally limited to a maximum speed of 40 kilometres per hour, significant damage can be incurred to the vehicle and occupants without the necessary safety features. It is also an unfortunate fact that many drivers continue to speed on our roads, which would inflict even greater damage to the vehicle. As mentioned before, this motion would encourage the use of LSVs on roads with a maximum speed limit of 60 kilometres per hour. A vehicle travelling at 80 kilometres per hour could inflict critical damage to an LSV travelling at its maximum permitted speed of 40 kilometres per hour.

Mr. Speaker, I thank our good friend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder for bringing forward this thoughtful motion. Should LSV manufacturers incorporate increased safety standards in the future, these vehicles could prove to be a viable alternative form of transportation for our province and for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do not have a wonderful prepared speech for this, but I did want to get in with a couple of points here. First of all, I want to thank the member for bringing this motion forward and also commend the government on having moved forward with two LSV projects here in Alberta already. There are a couple of things that I would like to raise as points, though.

First of all, these vehicles, though they are small, do take an enormous amount of greenhouse gases to manufacture, and they do

leave behind enormously big electrical batteries that will have to be disposed of. Even though people can feel really good about travelling along without being able to see the greenhouse gases that they are producing, there are, actually, greenhouse gases being produced. Where do we get our electricity from? It does not magically come from the world. So, you know, people can feel really good about driving around in these vehicles, even if they are heavy on the environment as most things that we do as people are.

Now, the other thing that I did want to raise was that there are no government regulations or no rules in the world that we can create which will overcome the laws of physics. If you have a big tanker truck coming down the street, and there's another SUV, which you might think is nice and big, and that tanker truck meets up with the SUV, that SUV is going to get wiped out. Similarly, if we have one of these wonderful little LSVs, and it gets hit by an SUV, well, hey, the SUV is bigger and, yeah, it's going to wipe out the LSV. There are no regulations that we can come to that will solve that problem.

At the same time, we also allow bicycles – bicycles – on our streets. We allow bicycles on those streets or motorcycles on those streets – okay? – those same streets that we allow cars and trucks on, and for some reason we seem to think that that's all right. How come all of a sudden we've got an LSV, and it's not all right to have it on that street, that same street that you have a little bicycle on? Hey, you know, we've got to get that figured out a little bit there.

All in all, I believe that this is something that we should be moving forward with. This is something that our constituents want. You know, these cars are another form of transportation, which I do believe we should be moving forward with. So I very much support the Member for Edmonton-Calder with this motion and hope that you will also support it.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members who wish to join the debate?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to close the debate.

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to rise and close debate and conclude the discussion on Motion 505. First, I would very much like to thank each of you who rose today to speak to this motion, including, of course, the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

I was a little nervous about the motion, I have to say. As I'd mentioned before, of course, the order of the motion is to urge the government to permit the use of the LSV, and with that, I certainly understand the need for some controls. The 60 kilometres an hour number is selfish because if I'm going to get one of these and drive it to work, I've got to have the 60 K limit, or I can't really use it.

I want to talk a little bit for a moment about a couple of the points that some of the hon. members have raised. First of all, hon. members, I'd like to assure all of you that we are not talking about modified golf carts. There is no correlation between an LSV and an electric golf cart. These go considerably faster and have . . . [interjection] No, actually, the LSV goes faster. They have considerably more technology in them than we're familiar with when we're on the golf course.

In saying that, I'll give you a couple of little stats because, you know, sometimes I'm kind of good for the technical side. Typically an electric golf cart has a battery pack capacity of somewhere between 36 and 48 volts. The smallest LSV has a battery pack of approximately 72 volts, and when you get into the high-end one,

which is a car called the Tesla, it has a 200-volt battery pack and is capable of doing about 160 kilometres an hour. [interjection] Two hundred volts. Tesla, yes.

Indeed, I fully understand and I fully appreciate the concern and the discussion about the safety standards for the LSV, but I trust that everyone here will realize that the standards are somewhat a function of the number of wheels on the vehicle. If the LSV had three instead of four wheels . . .

5:50

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** It would be a tricycle.

**Mr. Elniski:** That's right. It would be a tricycle, and the majority of the CMV safety standards that apply to four-wheeled motor vehicles would not apply. In fact, in their existing form, with three wheels LSVs would be perfectly legal to drive.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** It would be called Vespa.

**Mr. Elniski:** They would be called Vespas with side cars, actually. Yes, very much so.

I believe that LSVs will benefit Albertans with limited travel options in a number of ways. We've talked, certainly, about the savings in fuel and people's ability to use the money on other things. Because LSVs are powered by batteries, they emit no at-source greenhouse gases. We won't get into the whole generating electricity with coal thing. As has also been mentioned, you know, the car would be useful for a trip to the grocery store, to drop your kids off at the arena. For these short-distance trips, Mr. Speaker, the environmental benefits are clear. [interjection] No, I wouldn't, if I were you, hon. member, but you might.

Furthermore, I believe that LSVs would be a better option for many Albertans, certainly, than motorcycles or bicycles, both of which are currently permitted on the streets. The one thing that really motivated me to do this, Mr. Speaker, is that in my constituency I have many people who ride four-wheeled, single-seat scooters, a number of them who drive them on the streets.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Alberta should join its neighbouring provinces of Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec and explore the uses of LSVs on the road. I believe we can deal with the safety issues. If this motion passes, I want the first one.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The chair just wants to remind all of you here that the chair will call for the voice vote, so make sure your voice is heard.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I call on the Deputy Government House Leader, I want to remind all hon. members here that this Chamber will be used tomorrow morning, so please clear the desks. Take your laptop away with you and so on.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:53 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]







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