



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday, May 11, 2009

Issue 38

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

Second Session

Kowalski, Hon. Ken, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, Speaker  
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort, Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Deputy Chair of Committees

Ady, Hon. Cindy, Calgary-Shaw (PC),  
Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation  
Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)  
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)  
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Solicitor General and Public Security  
Benito, Carl, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)  
Berger, Evan, Livingstone-MacLeod (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Sustainable Resource Development  
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)  
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Montrose (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Advanced Education  
and Technology  
Blackett, Hon. Lindsay, Calgary-North West (PC),  
Minister of Culture and Community Spirit  
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),  
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)  
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Nose Hill (PC)  
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)  
Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Chase, Harry B., Calgary-Varsity (AL),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)  
Danyluk, Hon. Ray, Lac La Biche-St. Paul (PC),  
Minister of Municipal Affairs  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
Denis, Jonathan, Calgary-Egmont (PC)  
Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)  
Elniski, Doug, Edmonton-Calder (PC)  
Evans, Hon. Iris, Sherwood Park (PC),  
Minister of Finance and Enterprise  
Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)  
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Fritz, Hon. Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC),  
Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs  
Goudreau, Hon. Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace (PC),  
Minister of Employment and Immigration  
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Agriculture and Rural Development  
Groeneveld, Hon. George, Highwood (PC),  
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),  
Minister of Education, Government House Leader  
Hayden, Hon. Jack, Drumheller-Stettler (PC),  
Minister of Infrastructure  
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)  
Horne, Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)  
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert (PC),  
Minister of Advanced Education and Technology  
Jablonski, Hon. Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC),  
Minister of Seniors and Community Supports  
Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)  
Johnson, Jeff, Athabasca-Redwater (PC)  
Johnston, Art, Calgary-Hays (PC)  
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL)  
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC),  
Minister of Service Alberta  
Knight, Hon. Mel, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC),  
Minister of Energy  
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)  
Liepert, Hon. Ron, Calgary-West (PC),  
Minister of Health and Wellness  
Lindsay, Hon. Fred, Stony Plain (PC),  
Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security  
Lukaszuk, Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Municipal Affairs  
Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC)  
MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)  
Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)  
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Leader of the NDP Opposition  
McFarland, Barry, Little Bow (PC)  
McQueen, Diana, Drayton Valley-Calmar (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Environment  
Morton, Hon. F.L., Foothills-Rocky View (PC),  
Minister of Sustainable Resource Development  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Deputy Leader of the NDP Opposition,  
NDP Opposition House Leader  
Oberle, Frank, Peace River (PC),  
Government Whip  
Olson, Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)  
Ouellette, Hon. Luke, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (PC),  
Minister of Transportation  
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (AL),  
Deputy Official Opposition Whip  
Prins, Ray, Lacombe-Ponoka (PC)  
Quest, Dave, Strathcona (PC)  
Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General  
Renner, Hon. Rob, Medicine Hat (PC),  
Minister of Environment, Deputy Government House Leader  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon (PC)  
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)  
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Education  
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Health and Wellness  
Snelgrove, Hon. Lloyd, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
President of the Treasury Board  
Stelmach, Hon. Ed, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC),  
Premier, President of Executive Council  
Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC, Calgary-Glenmore (PC),  
Deputy Premier, Minister of International and  
Intergovernmental Relations  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (AL)  
Tarchuk, Hon. Janis, Banff-Cochrane (PC),  
Minister of Children and Youth Services  
Taylor, Dave, Calgary-Currie (AL)  
VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC)  
Vandermeer, Tony, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)  
Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Energy  
Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC),  
Parliamentary Assistant, Employment and Immigration  
Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC),  
Minister of Aboriginal Relations,  
Deputy Government House Leader

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Clerk	W.J. David McNeil	Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Shannon Dean
Clerk Assistant/ Director of House Services	Louise J. Kamuchik	Sergeant-at-Arms	Brian G. Hodgson
Clerk of <i>Journals</i> /Table Research	Micheline S. Gravel	Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms	J. Ed Richard
Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms	William C. Semple
		Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Liz Sim

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 11, 2009

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Welcome back.

Let us pray. We confidently ask for strength and encouragement in our service to others. We ask for wisdom to guide us in making good laws and good decisions for the present and the future of Alberta. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we'll now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Please feel free to join in in the language of your 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:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly His Excellency Pedro Moitinho de Almeida, ambassador of the Portuguese Republic. Accompanying His Excellency is Mr. Carlos de Sousa Amaro, consul general from Vancouver, and Mr. Aurélio Carmo Fernandes, honorary consul from here in Edmonton. I was honoured to host a special luncheon today in honour of His Excellency's first visit to Alberta.

Alberta and Portugal have a solid trading relationship, and the Portuguese community plays a prominent role in our province. We value the hard work and dedication of the Portuguese community in enriching our province. Their work helps increase the quality of life in our province and helps build stronger communities and a stronger Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the delegation rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature very special guests, students from Mundare school. I just took a picture with them. They're excited, well behaved, and spending an interesting afternoon here in the Legislature. They are accompanied by teacher Robin Derow and parent helpers Lisa McNeely and Michele Zurborg. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The young people from Mundare should also know that today is the birthday of their Member of the Legislative Assembly.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of this House 65 constituents, visitors from Gibbons school. We have three grade 6 classes here, and they are led by their two teachers, Ms Colleen Lowe and Miss Amy Jensen, and are accompanied by parent helpers Mrs. Niki Smyth, who's actually a councillor at the town of Gibbons, as well as Cory Smyth, Sherida Allison, Becky Sturm, Sandra Welsh, Stephanie Thimer, and Shiela Fediow. I had the pleasure to meet them and take a picture on the steps, and they took part in the mock Legislature this morning. I just want to welcome them and ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Legislature.

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

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I indeed have a great privilege to introduce two people to you and through you to members of the Assembly. One of them is my sister, who is here from Eugene, Oregon. She was the oldest in our family – so if I become out of control or unruly, she probably didn't do the task she was left to do that my mother left her – my sister Peggy. With her is my mother, Margaret. It's just maybe a little more special because of yesterday being Mother's Day. For those of us that had the opportunity to spend some time with our mothers, those of us that are lucky enough to still have them, on behalf of all of the Assembly to all the mothers of Alberta: let's give them a genuine welcome through my mother to them. [applause]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege of introducing to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly members of my staff from the workforce supports division. These are the people who work behind the scenes, supporting Albertans to upgrade their skills, make informed career choices, and get jobs. They create the policies around the skills investment, career services, and partnerships that help Albertans succeed in the workforce. I appreciate their commitment, dedication, and the high standard of work they consistently produce in support of all Albertans. I would ask that our guests stand as I introduce them: D'Arcy Claypool, Beryl Keller, Donna Bruce, Jaclyn Denman, Linda Willis, Shirley Meakin, Melissa Sliter, Denise Gazloff, Caroline Maran, Cindy Kleinmeyer, Synora Thomas, Azmina Walji, Annya Masse, Emma Abdelmaseh. I would ask all of the members of the Assembly to give these guests a very warm welcome to our Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have a special introduction today. Every year I am so impressed with the calibre of applicants for summer STEP positions. Edmonton-Riverview has been most fortunate again this year. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Rebecca Kos, who is seated in the public gallery. Do you want to stand up, please, Rebecca? She's entering her third year at the University of Alberta this coming September in the Faculty of Business, with a major in accounting and a minor in business law. I might need her services in the future.

Who knows? In her free time her interests include a variety of sports, including swimming and tennis, as well as singing and theatre. We're very fortunate to have her talent and enthusiasm in our office, and I'd like all members to please give her a warm welcome. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to the members of the Assembly seven members of the Kingsway Business Association. These members represent approximately 300 organizations in my constituency and are here today to show their support for the Edmonton City Centre Airport. I'll be discussing more about the KBA in a member's statement this afternoon. For now I would like to introduce board chair Mary Anne Stanway, Paul Gervais, Bob McEwen, Kathy Hall, George Marine, Don Koziak, and Karon Kosof. I'd ask them all to rise and please receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

#### Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When destruction hits our homes, our roads, our communities, when a disaster strikes and leaves us immobilized, when we are filled with fear and unable to help ourselves, or when an accident occurs and we are in need of help, the brave and selfless firefighter is there to come to our aid. The late author Kurt Vonnegut said: "I can think of no more stirring symbol of man's humanity to man than a fire engine." That resembles the members of the Lesser Slave regional fire service, who are heroes to many in our community because they embody skill, training, compassion, and commitment, and they help many, many people in need.

1:40

There is one individual, however, who has received recognition for his outstanding efforts. This past December, just five days before Christmas, a woman from Slave Lake drove into town to pick up her daughter. On the way home their truck hit a patch of ice and flipped upside down. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency it's a long way to the hospital. Jamie Coutts, volunteer firefighter and acting fire chief of Lesser Slave regional fire service, who lived nearby, was able to reach the accident scene within minutes, before other firefighters arrived, and saved two lives that day. He received commendation from the Minister of Municipal Affairs for his actions on behalf of his team.

When I asked him if I could use the names of the other firefighters who came to help he said: "Oh, no. Don't even mention my name. Names aren't necessary. Firefighting is the ultimate team effort." However, today on behalf of the family I do want to thank Jamie Coutts, who we call the man of the hour, who worked hard to save the two people. I'd also like to thank the Lesser Slave regional fire service for their service and commitment to their community. Keep up the great work.

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

#### Anniversary of Canada-Israel Diplomatic Relations

**Mr. Xiao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of myself, my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Creek, and all Members of the Legislative Assembly I rise to recognize the 60th anniversary of

diplomatic relations between Canada and Israel. Canada recognized the state of Israel upon its founding in 1948 and established formal diplomatic relations on May 11, 1949.

Over the last 60 years Canada and Israel have deepened this relationship through strong political, economic, cultural, and social ties. Alberta's Jewish community of 14,000 has been important to the development of these relationships, acting as a bridge between our two countries. In a world that faces many challenges, let us celebrate this 60th anniversary of relations and our commitment to continuing positive ties between Canada and Israel.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Calgary Airport Runway

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents and I are very concerned about the Calgary Airport Authority's plan to construct a fourth runway. We understand that the new runway is needed to serve Calgary's growing airport traffic, but we are opposed to how the authority's plan will not only segregate northeast Calgary from the airport but will affect 200,000 residents living on the east side. To construct a new runway, the city must close down Barlow Trail north of McKnight Boulevard. This will sever the northeast from the only link it has to the Calgary International Airport. Worse yet, there are no plans to build a new link between the northeast and the airport despite the fact that the northeast is the city's fastest growing quadrant.

Through the airport, the northeast is Calgary's gateway to the entire world. To maintain this position, the city needs adequate transportation infrastructure. To address this issue, my constituents have proposed that a tunnel be built under the new runway. The tunnel has been endorsed not only by the communities in my riding but by the city of Calgary and by the communities in the ridings of Calgary-Cross, Calgary-East, Calgary-North Hill, and Calgary-Montrose, whose members are seated on the government benches. I'm sure that communities in the other ridings of members opposite will also agree.

Mr. Speaker, this transportation artery is necessary to maintain the economic vitality of the whole city of Calgary. The price we would pay now is far smaller than the costs that would come later if we do nothing now. Without this link to the airport, Calgarians will see more pink slips, more business closures, a worsening quality of life for their families, and continuous transportation delays. This administration should accept the recommendations of Calgarians and ensure that the tunnel is built. It is the right thing to do for not only Calgary's future prosperity but also Alberta's.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Kingsway Business Association

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton Kingsway revitalization zone, or BRZ, was established by the city of Edmonton by bylaw in November of 1987. The Kingsway Business Association is an organization comprised of board members that represent both the large and small businesses in the region. The KBA has continually worked towards making Edmonton Kingsway the preferred place to shop, play, fly, and stay.

The major goals of this nonprofit organization are to continue to enhance the projects for Edmonton Kingsway and to support efforts to promote the long-term viability of the Edmonton City Centre Airport. Again, the debate about the City Centre Airport is one that

affects many people in Alberta. The status of this airport is integral to organizations like the KBA because they are trying to make Edmonton Kingsway into a destination, and without an active airport this would be very difficult. The KBA is also concerned about the future of the airport, and frankly so am I. The ongoing debate needs to address the issues with the city and key stakeholders to ensure that the best interests of the capital region are met.

It is important to keep the dialogue going and to pay close attention to the wisdom and concerns voiced by organizations like the Kingsway Business Association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### National Mining Week

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to recognize National Mining Week, which was first celebrated in 1996, acknowledging the importance of the Canadian mining industry to the economic development of Canada and Alberta. I've spent over 35 years in the mining sector, 30 of them in coal. The coal mining community has played a significant role in the early and current development of the province.

Over 1,800 mines are known to have operated in Alberta and were first mined to supply domestic heating needs. Lethbridge had its first coal mine in 1882, while the first mine in Edmonton was 1883. Some of the earliest mining in Alberta was within the now Banff national park. The Crownsnest Pass in southern Alberta was also developed as a coal mining centre to supply coal to the CPR. A similar role was established in west-central Alberta for an area known as the Coal Branch in my constituency, an area just south of Hinton. A number of mines and towns developed to supply coal to the Grand Trunk and the Canadian National railways. The towns of Nordegg and Grande Cache both were developed for the purpose of coal mining.

Early coal mining established the first major trade corridors between Alberta and British Columbia, the historic Coal Branch segment of the Canadian National Railway. The trade and transport of goods between these two provinces has grown in size and diversity today from the beginnings of the Coal Branch railway. In 1964, Mr. Speaker, Great Canadian Oil Sands, now Suncor, started mining oil sands to produce crude bitumen when Fort McMurray was a small trading post. Commodities mined in Alberta include oil sands, coal, limestone, salt, shale, dimension stone, ammonite shell, sandstone, sand, and gravel.

Today mining is a high-tech industry, and many aspects of modern mining are controlled by computers. There are 15 major mines and quarries in Alberta: 11 coal and oil sands mines and four major quarries. Coal and oil sands mining contributes approximately 3.1 per cent, or \$3.3 billion, to the provincial economy. The minerals industry, excluding oil and gas, is estimated to directly employ about 10,000 people in Alberta. Communities that have a significant dependence for their livelihoods on mining include Fort McMurray, Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache, Forestburg, Hanna, and Wabamun to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House join me in recognizing National Mining Week.

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

### Foreign Workers

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recently I was fortunate enough to attend a symposium on immigration laws and

employment called Meet the Filipino Foreign Workers. It was sponsored by Iglesia ni Cristo, also known as Church of Christ, south side local, with approval and blessings from their head office in Manila, Philippines. The Asian Christian Cultural Association of Alberta Centre was filled to its capacity with noted guests, representatives, stakeholders, and interested members of the public.

This invaluable and informative session brought together those with backgrounds in immigration law, legal rights, and employment standards to share information on foreign workers. I would like to thank the Philippine labour attaché, based in Vancouver, representatives from the employment standards, and the Alberta immigrant nominee program along with immigration law experts for attending the symposium.

One topic that was brought forward to both employers and employees attending was the fact that the employer retains the discretion for layoffs, not the government. Their decision should not be based on country of origin. Rather, the decision should be based on what is best for the business, its customers, and its employees. Laying off people must be a difficult decision for any employer. I would like to acknowledge those companies who choose to retain individuals based on the skills they bring, the contributions they make to the workforce, not on their country of origin.

I would like also to acknowledge the hard-working Albertans, Canadians, and individuals who have left other countries to contribute to the success of this province. Whether you are a short-term or a long-term resident, your hard work is appreciated by this government and will continue to play a positive role in Alberta's bright future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### Parental Choice in Education

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The parental opt-out clause being proposed by the Alberta human rights legislation has become an international embarrassment. Under the influence of minority right-wing groups this government has threatened our public education system and not considered the implications of Bill 44 on the teachers. This government had a chance to rid itself of the image of being backward and out of touch with the rest of the world, but it failed. To the Premier: why did the Premier allow such a controversial section to be included in what could have been a very progressive piece of legislation?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I really do take exception to another elected member of this House calling this province backward, especially this Assembly, when we look at the number of people who have been elected to this Assembly from so many different religious backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, coming from so many different countries, looking to this province for opportunity, and who have really found it.

I want to be very clear on this matter, very clear. Bill 44 confirms the existing situation – existing situation – that exists in policy, to opt out of religious instruction and sex education. It does not give parents the right to opt out of other instruction on religious grounds. All I ask is: please read the bill.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has stated – and I was present at the time – that students could be pulled from class

on issues around evolution while the culture minister has said explicitly that they could not. Will the Premier clarify: which is the correct answer?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, it's very clear in the bill, and again I'm asking all Albertans to read the bill. You know, every time these issues are raised in the House, that's fine. It's good for debate. But at least debate on correct information.

The other fact is that recently in a poll done by *Maclean's* magazine, which I think probably is a little, you know, left of centre – I'm being very gracious to them – has said that Alberta, this great province of Alberta, is even more tolerant or accepting of people than our neighbouring province of British Columbia. I think that is a very positive statement for all Albertans.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, again, Mr. Premier, will you answer the question? Can students be removed from class on discussions of evolution? Yes or no?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, let me read into the record again that Bill 44 confirms the existing situation to opt out of religious instruction and sex education. It does not give parents the right to opt out of other instruction on religious grounds.

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

#### Alberta Health Services Capital Reserve

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the news release accompanying the budget, there was a statement regarding the three-year capital plan for health, mentioning a \$1.5 billion cash reserve for Alberta Health Services; however, there's no mention of how or when this \$1.5 billion cash reserve will be spent. To the Premier: can the Premier explain how Alberta Health Services is expected to run a deficit this last fiscal year yet have \$1.5 billion listed as capital reserve on hand?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta in our accounting practices has to separate capital dollars away from operational dollars. That is the law. That's the way we do our accounting based on generally accepted accounting principles. We split it in terms of capital, you know, long-term investment, and operational, which would be the daily expenses of health. Whether it be heart surgery, cancer treatment, those are operational. Capital will be the new hospitals, the equipment in the hospitals, anything that is a long-term expenditure on infrastructure.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, why are there so many health facilities on hold, including Stollery children's, Medicine Hat, and Grande Prairie hospitals, when Alberta is sitting on a \$1.5 billion reserve?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I'll have the minister responsible reply to that specific question.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] We made it quite clear when we identified the financial plan for this year's budget – and last time I looked, I was still finance minister – that the amount of money that was already provided to the various health authorities, \$1.5 billion, that wasn't spent over a number of years

would be in fact lapsed to Alberta Health Services for expenditure and follow-up on over and above the amount of money that's in this year's budget for new capital expenditure, so it's the reserve from years past.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you. To the health minister: can the health minister detail how much of and where the \$1.5 billion capital reserve will be spent?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition has to recognize that the \$1.5 billion in reserve is already committed dollars. What we had over the past couple of years – and I'm sure he'd recognize this – was a heated economy, and it was an issue of construction projects not proceeding as quickly as they had been budgeted for, and thereby there were cash reserves. So this isn't new money; this is money that has already been allocated for projects that could not be put out to the construction provider because they hadn't yet got to a process where they could take that money.

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

#### Marketing of Agricultural Products

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Bill 43 is dissolving this Premier's credibility in the red meat sector. It's widely perceived as a favour from the Premier to the secret donors who backed his leadership campaign. To the Premier: will the Premier admit that Bill 43 will hurt the smaller players in the beef industry and, in fact, is a serious blow to the pork, lamb, and potato producers while it's a huge benefit to the giant feedlots that backed his leadership campaign?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, this line of questioning occurred before. It's funny; he calls it secret, yet everybody seems to know – he knows at least – who contributed to everybody's campaign. I suppose the next time there's a question that comes up on royalties, it will be significant to mention that that party received considerably more from one major oil company than the whole Progressive Conservative Party. So, you know, if you want to play games, we can play games.

In terms of the red meat industry, we've come to a crucial point, and that is: how do we gain access to markets around the world excluding the United States? I just came back from Switzerland. For the first time we had Alberta beef served in Switzerland. Switzerland is not part of the European Union, but through Switzerland hopefully we can reach out and access markets in the major centres because we cannot depend on one market, and that is the United States. They've shut us out a number of times, and we can't do that anymore for the sake of all our producers.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the people watching know the Premier didn't answer my question at all. The same people and companies who were widely reported to have backed the Premier's leadership bid with important but undisclosed resources also turn up on the board of ATB, on various PC donor lists, and in the last couple of years have received millions of dollars in government grants. Some of these are also expected to benefit handsomely from Bill 43. Will the Premier follow best practice – that's all we're

asking here – clear the air on Bill 43, and finally disclose the list of secret donors to his leadership campaign? Here's the opportunity.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I can go back and pull the files in terms of who contributed to the campaign and who didn't. This has got nothing to do with who contributed either to my campaign or to individual campaigns of any member of this House. I am sure that there are some people on the other side of the House that received donations from other beef producers.

However, set that aside and concentrate on how we are going to gain access in other markets around the world. That is the critical issue. This bill is referring to the check-off that producers pay, whether it be pork, potatoes, also beef. We're meeting with the industry. We're giving them a year to adjust. The bill is fair, it's going through the House, and this is looking to the future of this industry.

2:00

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the Premier that all the members on this side of the Assembly have fully disclosed all donations. I wish the Premier would do the same.

My question to him is: out of respect to the large majority of beef, pork, lamb, and potato producers in this province, who I'm sure his office is hearing from, will the Premier put Bill 43 on hold?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as the Premier of the province and also as one that is responsible for the welfare, the general direction that the meat industry has to take in this province of Alberta, I stand committed to the bill. We've got to move forward, take the politics out of it, and start positioning this province as open to markets around the world.

This is something I learnt coming back from Switzerland. We have the best traceability in Canada and, indeed, in North America, in fact to rival many other countries, yet we cannot gain access to the European Union because other countries are beating us that don't even have anywhere near the traceability. Now we have ensure that we do whatever we can to position ourselves through our world trade ambassadors to make sure that our needs are heard, that we work with all the industry, the red-meat industry, to build those markets. We can't depend on the Americans because they already showed us how they're dealing with us under COOL.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Those are some pretty long answers.

#### New Home Warranty

**Mr. Mason:** My question is to the Premier. An increasing number of homes in Alberta are mouldy wrecks just a few years after being built. Many new-home owners have to dole out thousands of dollars to fix problems from the exterior insulation and finish system within just a year or two of taking possession. Will the Premier commit today to ensuring that builders take responsibility for their shoddy workmanship by extending the homeowner warranty on building envelopes to five years?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the whole situation came up just about a week ago, and the government, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, is working with other ministers, looking at this issue of

building code and will be able to report back to Albertans at a later date.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Currently builders are only required to take responsibility for the work for the first year of home ownership. In the case of condos the clock begins the moment the first owner takes possession, meaning the last owner to move in may have no warranty whatsoever. Engineers and other experts are calling on the government to require builders to back up their work for five years. Will the Premier commit today to protecting new-home owners by giving them a reasonable sense of security and introduce a five-year warranty on new-home exteriors?

**Mr. Stelmach:** As I said, I'll take the whole question under advisement because this is a matter that we do take seriously as a government. We'll thoroughly investigate and bring the information forward.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we've seen how much the pine shake fiasco cost Albertans just a few years ago, and we know that leaky condos in B.C. cost homeowners billions of dollars. Here we go again, Mr. Speaker. Again home and condo owners are left holding the bag because this government doesn't protect them. Will the Premier commit today to ensuring that Alberta homeowners will not be stuck with costly repairs in one or two years' time, or will he once again leave them soaking wet?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we're reviewing all of the information, looking at the evidence that's coming forward, and we will be making the appropriate decision based on the best evidence brought forward.

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

#### Anthony Henday Drive Interchanges

**Mr. Xiao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I feel like it's Christmas. I was very pleased to attend the Edmonton ring road announcement this morning for the start of the Lessard Road and the Callingwood Road interchanges. These ring road interchanges have moved forward thanks to the commitment of the Premier, the minister, and all my caucus colleagues for investing in Alberta's highway network. This is exciting news for my constituents, who have been concerned about the growing amount of traffic congestion in Edmonton's southwest. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. How quickly can these interchanges be completed and open to traffic?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that my department is going to tender the Lessard Road and Callingwood Road intersections in the next week or two. That means that construction will begin this summer on these interchanges and that they will be complete by the fall of 2011. In fact, in 2011 that whole west side will be better because that's when we will also be opening the Stony Plain Road and Anthony Henday northwest, the 21 kilometres of it. It'll be great for northwest Edmonton.

**Mr. Xiao:** Again to the same minister. Thanks to the announcement today there is only one traffic signal left on the ring road. When will the minister commit to building the final interchange at Cameron Heights Drive and remove all the traffic signals on Anthony Henday Drive?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, our Premier has set a goal of having all the ring roads done in Edmonton by 2015. When the Premier has a goal, I'm going to work my little buns off to make sure that that goal is achieved and that whole, entire side will be free flow by that time. I will say that we're going ahead right now with the design work on that interchange.

**Mr. Xiao:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that statement. To the same minister again: can the minister describe how the April 28 open house was advertised for the Anthony Henday Drive interchanges at Cameron Heights Drive and Rabbit Hill Road?

Thanks.

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the open house was advertised in a number of ways. We had roadway signs at six different locations to advertise to motorists about the open house. We also sent out notices to the residents in the communities and advertised with the local community leagues. In addition, we advertised for the open house in the *Edmonton Examiner* and the *Edmonton Sun*.

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

#### Funding for Teachers' Collective Agreements

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this government can change legislation at the drop of a hat to run a deficit when it can't balance its budget, school boards are prevented by law from running deficits. School boards are entirely dependent on the government's commitment to fund the salary increases promised as part of the five-year collective agreement. Without this financial commitment boards will be forced to significantly cut people and programs. To the Minister of Education: are school boards expected to spend whatever amounts they have managed to set aside for future projects in their surplus accounts before the government will provide the increased funding for collective agreements?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, we've made the commitment to fully fund the teacher agreement that was entered into, that's provided this great period of stability in the education system, and we will adhere to that commitment. We provided funding in the budget to make sure that school boards had the funding that they needed to finance their remaining collective agreements. It's a little bit tighter for them because of the change that Statistics Canada made to their average weekly earnings index calculation, but those agreements the school boards made, they need to deal with. As I said before, we've made an agreement to talk with the ATA and the Alberta School Boards Association about how we deal with the change in the way the average weekly earnings are calculated.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. The minister stated in the budget debate that teachers' salaries are "not the school board's problem." Why, therefore, are Edmonton public schools expressing concerns about significant layoffs if the funding, \$21 million worth, is in place? Where in the budget is this money guaranteed or accounted for?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no indication at all at the moment that there's any additional money required, so of course it's not in the budget or guaranteed or accounted for. What we did say is that we would meet the funding requirement to implement the teachers' agreement, and we committed to that. At the time the budget went to bed, the number that was known was 4.8 per cent, and we've budgeted for that. We have in place an understanding with the Alberta Teachers' Association and with the Alberta School Boards Association that we need to discuss whether there needs to be a change to the way the average weekly earnings index is calculated. Stats Canada has changed the way they've calculated it, but that's a subject of discussion for us as we go forward.

**Mr. Chase:** Unfortunately, while these calculations are being made, thousands of teachers are facing potential layoffs, and a lot of those teachers are the young ones in temporary and first-year contracts. Having failed to reach the K to 3 class size targets, are these targets now going to be abandoned to make up for the funding shortfall in teachers' wages?

2:10

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, there is no funding shortfall for teachers' wages. I don't know how many times I have to say this to the hon. member or to people out there. The commitment that this government made to school boards is that we would fund the teachers' agreement, and we will fund the teachers' agreement. The question is: what's the amount? We've said to school boards: budget on the basis that whatever the amount is, we've undertaken to fund it. We have to determine what that amount is, but there should be no school board across this province that is either laying off or terminating contracts for teachers on the basis that they're not funded for their salaries because they are funded for their salaries, and they will be funded for their salaries.

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

#### Federal Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January the federal government announced over \$12 billion in economic infrastructure stimulus. My constituents were particularly interested to know that \$4 billion of that over two years was going to restore aging infrastructure. My first question is to the hon. President of the Treasury Board. Could he give us an update on whether Alberta has received its share of the federal stimulus package this year?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** No, Mr. Speaker, we haven't received our share of the budget. We have been working very, very diligently with the people from both Minister Merrifield's and Minister Baird's offices to try and get the agreement in place. We have been working on the specific projects that have been identified by the different departments in the Alberta government and some of the projects that our federal cousins have put forward. I would say that it's a work in progress, but I would expect the agreement in principle is very close.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the hon. President of the Treasury Board. I noticed that when this budget was delivered, there were a number of strings and conditions as far as sharing of funding and what projects might or might not get funded. Could you please indicate whether this is impacting the amount of money that Alberta will be receiving, particularly since



Alberta has spent significant amounts of money in infrastructure and to municipalities in the MSI funding?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is problematic in the way that Alberta has built over the past few years and continues to build infrastructure at a very rapid pace. The departments, quite honestly, have gotten very efficient and very good at understanding, organizing, and putting forward these projects. While it's a train moving very quickly, where the federal government is trying to feed some of the hopper cars with some money and help us out, we haven't been waiting. We have been trying to live up to the intent of their stimulus package, which is to get Albertans and, indeed, all Canadians working. That's what we're trying to do, but it's a work in progress.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the announcement of this economic stimulus money, is this changing any of the infrastructure priorities in Alberta to be able to receive this money from the federal government?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Well, yes, it does in a way in that it moves some of the projects that we were going to be unable to do up in line in the queue. It also allows the federal government to partner up in some of the projects that may be staged and otherwise would have taken years to complete. So it's kind of a method of putting together where they're comfortable with their participation in some of the staging, where they're comfortable in participating in some of the ongoing maintenance, like they announced last week with our universities and colleges. We found, Mr. Speaker, that by sitting down with the different departments, identifying where we are in the go-forward with the projects, we're able to determine how it suits our capital budget.

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

#### Automobile Insurance

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk car insurance today. Using data from the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Canadian Bar Association has found that the surge in auto insurance claims in New Brunswick had little to do with the increase in premiums and that there is no correlation between claims and the actual average premium. These findings completely contradict the reasoning that this government has been using for fighting its own legal battles to keep the minor injury cap in place. To the Minister of Justice and Attorney General: how much money has the government spent in legal fees appealing the provincial court's ruling against the minor injury cap in Alberta?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the government of Alberta's position is that this is an important piece of public policy. I know that there are governments across this country who are looking to what the government of Alberta is doing with respect to this. We are looking forward to the result, and we expect the Court of Appeal to make a decision shortly.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I will continue to look forward to an answer someday to my question.

To the minister of finance: will the minister be using the information found in the New Brunswick study to reform the government's auto insurance policy on minor injury caps?

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

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Justice has identified, this issue is before the courts. We have not had any comment, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

**Mr. Taylor:** Quite a few answers in a few weeks' time, by the sound of things, Mr. Speaker.

Rather than continuing to spend taxpayers' dollars fighting legal battles on the side of insurance companies, will the minister of finance fight on the side of Albertans and introduce public auto insurance?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we've had conversations about that issue in this House before. We've identified, for example, the billions of dollars that other governments have spent in ways that are abusing taxpayers' dollars to cover auto insurance. I believe that all Albertans are well served by the existing plan that we have in place. We hope it continues.

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

#### WorldSkills Calgary 2009

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The provincial skills competition starts tomorrow in Edmonton, and the WorldSkills competition is about four months away. With over 1,000 competitors from 51 countries and an expected 150,000 spectators this is a huge event. However, WorldSkills is expected to cost taxpayers \$21 million. My questions are to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. What is the economic benefit of this competition to the city of Calgary and this province?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question because it is taxpayers' dollars that we're putting out. We expect, based on some economic analysis that was done pre-event sponsored by the WorldSkills competition, that we'll more than double our investment in returns to both the economy and to the city as well as to the province. Really, this is about much more than just the money. This is about training our young Albertans for careers in the trades and in skills competition. It's about providing learning opportunities. It's about highlighting the employers who share in the training of these young people. This is a great event for Alberta. It will help showcase Alberta around the world.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. There are so many talented tradespeople in this province. What criteria are used to select these individuals who represent their provinces and country, for that matter, for the world competition?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, we have several competitions throughout the province that are ongoing. It's similar to any other competition: you work your way through the playoffs, if you will. Those students are going to be the ones that will be showcased in the competition.

Really, what we're trying to do is inspire all of our youth who would look to or maybe not look to consider a career in the trades by way of this competition. In fact, my colleague the hon. Minister of Education is also supporting this WorldSkills competition, making it possible for an estimated 54,000 students to attend.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. Canada lags behind when it comes to world trade competitions. What are we doing to help our tradespeople to perform better on the world stage?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a tremendous commitment to skills training. In fact, although we may have 10 per cent of Canada's population, we train close to 20 per cent of Canada's tradespeople. That alone suggests to Canadians that we take this very, very seriously. We're going to show a very strong support for WorldSkills. It's one of the reasons why it's here. We agree that we want to raise the bar as far as our skills training goes and, again, highlight these careers that are available for young Albertans.

#### Protection of Freedom of Expression

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, the lack of any thought into Bill 44, not only with the inclusion of the parental opt-out clause but with the exclusion of extending protection for freedom of speech in this province, and the fact that section 3 of the act, which deals with freedom of speech, is not being amended back to the pre-1996 wording are just other examples of how this government has failed in its attempt to revitalize human rights in Alberta. To the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit: why has this minister chosen not to protect freedom of speech in Alberta?

2:20

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think free speech actually needs to be defended in Alberta. We have free speech every day. We have it in this Legislature. We have it in our schools. We have it in our homes. We have it in our communities. We're doing nothing different. We have some concerns with respect to the recommendations for section 3 because we feel, our Progressive Conservative government, that we have to make sure that those individuals who are discriminated against, that the Human Rights Commission is supposed to protect, are protected against hate crimes. We're not convinced that the provisions in the Canadian Criminal Code actually protect those. That's the opposition's response. That's who they forget they should be representing. We represent all Albertans.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the parental opt-out clause has led to unintended consequences that the government didn't even think about, how will this government deal with the unintended consequences of denying freedom of speech to Albertans such as complaints being filed with the commission about honestly held beliefs or cartoons about religion?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, I look at excerpts from *Hansard*. The hon. member asked this question on April 16: "What is [your] position on amending the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act to write in sexual orientation?" Again on May 21: "Can the minister tell me why race and disability are currently enumerated grounds but not sexual orientation?"

**Ms Blakeman:** What's your point?

**Mr. Blackett:** The point is that in the last 13 months the hon. member's opposition party never ever mentioned the words "freedom of speech." Their cause célèbre was the inclusion of sexual orientation. That's all they ever talked about. We in this caucus, sir, have delivered a bill that encompasses all the beliefs of Albertans.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's kind of nice that the hon. minister did accept our recommendations for including sexual orientation.

What the big print giveth, the small print taketh away sometimes, I've been warned. Will the minister commit to amending Bill 44 by returning to the pre-1996 wording of section 3, as recommended by the Sheldon Chumir foundation?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, when our caucus is assured that visible minorities or people in our aboriginal communities can walk around freely without the fear of being exposed unduly to discrimination with respect to hate crimes and that the Criminal Code will not have a test that's so exorbitant that we cannot get a charge laid or a conviction made because of it, then we'll look at that. It's our responsibility as a government to make sure that we take care of the less fortunate.

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

#### Groundwater Monitoring

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to a national scientific report released today by the Council of Canadian Academies, our groundwater is being increasingly threatened by contamination and misuse. We don't know how much we have, where it is, or how it's being used. What is this government's answer? Cut the budget for groundwater monitoring by 50 per cent. To the Minister of Environment: how can the minister justify cutting the budget at the very time scientists are telling us that we aren't doing enough and that we need to do much better to protect our groundwater?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right: this Council of Canadian Academies came out with a report today. But this is a report that applies to all of Canada, and it's a generalization, that generally speaking, there is insufficient background information available with respect to groundwater. What this member has not acknowledged is that Alberta is far ahead of most other jurisdictions, and we've already begun and have a huge wealth of information and are committed to continuing to develop the information.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, according to the report, the oil sands region is in jeopardy. The experts there say that our environmental impact assessments are inadequate, that we can't measure the factors that impact tailings ponds leakage, and the government's regulators do not have the expertise or the resources they need to evaluate industry's groundwater studies. That's what the report says about Alberta, yet this government is planning to cut the budget for monitoring in half. To the minister: why won't he admit that the problems identified in this report are only going to get worse in the face of his current budget cuts?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this member was at committee the night that we discussed our budget. She knows perfectly well that the reductions in monitoring of groundwater have nothing to do with the industrial areas. The commitment was made, and I think I made it abundantly clear – she can check the record – that there are no reductions scheduled with respect to groundwater monitoring in the industrial areas. The area where we slowed up our groundwater monitoring is in the development of new information, where we have moved from annual reporting to in some cases biennial reporting. So the question is not accurate.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, overall the budget is being cut in half. Now this report suggests that the single most important factor in managing our water resources is knowledge. We need accurate and timely reporting, follow-up on water quality compliance, and insurance that contaminated sites are cleaned up. This ain't gonna happen with a budget that's being cut in half. Will the Minister of Environment explain to ordinary Albertans why he feels comfortable gambling with the resources we all count on by cutting the funds necessary to monitor them?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, one of the key objectives of this government is to implement cumulative effects environmental management tools. Cumulative effects environmental management tools deal with outcomes. This member is mired in the past. This member is mired in recording history and not looking at the reality that we are concentrating and are putting all of our focus on: the future. We have determined that it is in the best interests of the environment and in the best interests of Albertans for us to focus on the future to ensure that we have the necessary legislation and policies in place, to have the cumulative effects legislative regime in place.

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

#### Forest Industry Sustainability

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the government released its response to the recommendations contained in the Forest Industry Sustainability Committee's final report. The government was unable to offer direct financial support to the industry, so the response focuses on government policies and practices. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. How will addressing government policies and practices help the industry?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the debt that we all owe to the hon. Member for Peace River, who was the chair of the committee that wrote the report. An excellent report it was.

I'm also happy to report that we accepted 90 per cent, 43 of the 49 recommendations made in that report. These recommendations will provide new government policies and initiatives that will create a more competitive and more efficient forestry industry. We think that, for example, changes in the tenure system that allow flexibility and divisibility will help forestry companies decide how and when to develop fibre in a way that works for them.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the risk of sounding like Chip 'n Dale, I'll thank the minister for appointing me to the committee.

To the same minister: could he inform this House as to what is being done now to help the industry in the short term?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd remind the hon. member that his committee was asked to make recommendations for the long-term sustainability of the industry and not for the short term. In fact, we are doing a number of things that do address short-term concerns. The nine-point bioenergy plan, which forestry companies participate in, has provided \$238 million in grants over five years. We're providing money to FPIInnovations, which does research and product innovation and market research for forestry companies, and this year the community development trust fund is providing \$10 million for worker retraining and retention in resource communities, again including forestry communities.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister: how long will it take for the industry to feel the benefit of government changes today?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, there are certain factors that influence the industry: the macro factors that we cannot control, and then there are things that we can control inside. The macro factors – the collapse of the U.S. housing market, the rise in the exchange rate on the loonie, the global recession credit crunch – are the big things that are hurting the industry. We can't control those, but we are taking some of the initiatives and policies I alluded to earlier that will make a difference this year. If the macro factors don't get worse, I believe that our initiatives will begin to show improvements this year.

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

2:30

#### Air Quality

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government's air quality measurement doesn't just suck; it wheezes. Last week downtown Edmonton was covered by a smoky haze from the brush fires near Fort Saskatchewan, yet the government's air quality instruments continued to measure "good" for that period, which is a testament to Alberta's poor air quality standards. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. How can the ministry have instruments which measure air quality as good when the smoke is so bad that we can all smell it, see it, and breathe it?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the gauge that is used to determine the air quality index is a combination of a number of different measurements, most of which have to do with identified pollutants. What the member is referring to was the result, as we all know, of fires that were in the region and relates to particulate matter. Particulate matter, yes, is part of the air quality index, but the instruments that we use are checking for a number of other contaminants like ozone and SO<sub>2</sub>.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, particulates have the most serious effect on asthmatics.

Back to the same minister. The minister says that the government is outcome focused. What outcome, aside from smoky air, is the government implementing that's an improvement on the national air quality index?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I guess the member suggests that I should have been out there putting out the fires. By the way, we were. My colleague from SRD had a number of people that were out working and helping with fighting those fires. The fact of the matter is that we are focused on ensuring that we have a system in place that measures the kinds of pollutants that will be a true determination of the strength of our regulatory system in ensuring that our industrial emissions in this province remain within acceptable limits.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Back to the same minister. Maybe I can help you out a bit. In the past the minister has said that the reason that Alberta doesn't participate in the national air quality index is that Alberta's circumstances are unique. I'm wondering what unique circumstance Alberta could possibly have that means we measure smoky air as good quality.

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the issue that the member refers to is that we have in place an air quality index that is a component of a number of measurements, most of which relate to industrial emissions of one kind or another. We're focused on ensuring that we can adequately measure the amount of volatile organic compounds that are in the air, the amount of NOx, nitrogen dioxide, that is in the air, which then results in smog. At the end of the day, we feel that given the circumstances in Alberta, given the fact that we've got a high concentration of industrial emissions, it makes more sense for us to concentrate on those areas.

#### Workforce Employment Services

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Mr. Speaker, my first question is to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Over the past few months we have seen many Albertans lose their jobs. My constituents would like to know: what is the government doing to assist Albertans affected by the current economic slowdown?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our staff responds to layoffs they hear about through the media and through my particular office. Our staff reach out to those that are affected and offer free career services, including career planning, employment retraining programs, and connections to local employers who are hiring. I would emphasize that there are still employers who are hiring. Whether it is by posting jobs over our free website or holding recruitment events in our offices, we are helping employers find the people they need.

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

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is also to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. These employment services seem well intentioned, but how are they actually helping anyone?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, our staff are helping hundreds of

Albertans get back to work every day. I want to show one example, and that was the closure of the General Electric Money call centre in Edmonton. Our Employment and Immigration staff delivered presentations to the affected staff about our services. They organized job fairs for 120 GE Money employees, with 19 employers talking to them. To date 97 former GE Money staff have had interviews, and more than 50 have new jobs.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, is that okay?

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

#### Ministerial and Senior Official Vehicle Fleet

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ministerial and senior vehicle allowance is a very generous perk. Despite repeated requests, the Minister of Service Alberta has failed to bring in guidelines that would make the use of that perk more responsible to the environment. In budget debates the minister said that some vehicles in the total government fleet were hybrids but did not talk specifically about the \$40,000 perk that ministers and deputy ministers get. To the Minister of Service Alberta: why hasn't the minister acted to put environmental responsibility as a requirement on these ministerial and senior official vehicles?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the fleet that Service Alberta runs and with respect to the fleet of executive and ministerial vehicles, they are two very separate items. Most certainly, it is up to the individual choice of the ministers to decide if they choose to take a vehicle.

With respect to the fleet, with respect to the whole issue of hybrid vehicles, I am pleased to say that we are up to 50 hybrid vehicles in the fleet, and we are moving forward on a number of those.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a perk of the job, and the minister could very easily put a requirement on it for environmental responsibility. This is not a hard change. We aren't talking about many vehicles here, but the minister seems to need years of consultation. We are talking about the ministerial and senior vehicle staff only. When will the consultation end and responsible decision-making begin, Minister?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it will certainly not be years of consultation. In this whole area, again, in looking at whether it's a hybrid vehicle and the uses for it in different parts of Alberta, that's a number one concern. Again, I've said it before: we are not going to just merely do something just because it looks good. It has to actually work, and it has to be a good use of taxpayers' dollars with respect to the service fleet.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the minister has been taking so long to think about these changes, there must be a draft proposal for fuel efficiency standards. What are they?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another approach that we do take within the fleet is vehicles that are more efficient with respect to gas mileage, linking that with the hybrid vehicles. There are a whole number of areas that we have been working on with the Department of Environment, and we are hopeful that we're going to be moving ahead on some very innovative directions, so you can certainly look forward to that.

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

#### Energy Efficiency Rebates

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did some door-knocking on the weekend and had some pretty good chats with some constituents of mine. In talking to them, a number of them are interested in making some energy efficiency improvements to their homes. I learned that some of these types of purchases are slightly more expensive than standard purchases. It's not cheap to replace a furnace or a hot water tank. I know that we have a rebate program in place here in Alberta, but I wonder if it's enough of an incentive in these difficult economic times. My question is to the Minister of Environment: are Albertans taking you up on this offer, or are these purchases still out of reach?

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, about a month ago we announced about \$36 million in energy efficiency rebates to consumers. I'm very pleased to report that to date over 3,000 Albertans have filed applications for these programs. I think that's an indication that Albertans recognize that it's a wise investment despite the tough economic times that we find ourselves in. Rebates are engaging Albertans. It's giving them an opportunity to appreciate that everyone has a role to play and that there are opportunities to save money. More importantly, I think it creates some economic stimulus as well.

**Mr. Webber:** My first supplemental to the same minister. With over 3,000 applicants in one month, Mr. Minister, that's really quite excellent. The program seems very popular. But just what type of environmental difference is this making?

2:40

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a key plank in our climate change strategy is energy efficiency. We've often talked in this House about carbon capture and storage and all of the other technologies that are associated, but this is an opportunity for individual Albertans to play a role. Overall, we have forecast a 24 million tonne reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> as a result of energy efficiency. This particular program, when it's fully subscribed, should be responsible for about a million tonnes, or 200,000 cars off the road. Overall, that's 200 megatonnes by 2050, and 24 megatonnes of that will come through energy conservation and efficiency.

**Mr. Webber:** My final question to the same minister: with the \$36 million government investment in this initiative, is that enough? Is the minister considering expanding the program any time soon?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this is one of those programs where you could truly say that there will never be enough. We could always expand this program. In my humble opinion, it's not enough, and I think that we should be expanding the program. Will we expand the program? I guess that question really has to be

addressed to the President of Treasury Board. But the fact of the matter is that as we're able to accommodate within a reasonable fiscal agenda, it certainly is my intention to continue to argue that programs like this are doing what they need to do and should be expanded over time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 94 questions and responses today. In 30 seconds from now we'll continue the Routine.

#### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 47 Appropriation Act, 2009

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 47, the Appropriation Act, 2009. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, from the delivery of the budget back on April 7, 2009, by the Minister of Finance and Enterprise, five all-party standing committees of the Legislative Assembly have spent some 72 hours reviewing and debating the budget. Very clearly, this budget represents the values and priorities of Albertans and during these uncertain economic times presents a clear and positive way forward for all the citizens of Alberta.

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

#### Bill 48 Crown's Right of Recovery Act

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and introduce first reading of Bill 48, the Crown's Right of Recovery Act.

Currently the province's authority to recover health care costs resulting from wrongful acts or omissions is contained within the Hospitals Act. This bill is proposing that separate legislation be created specifically for this authority because it covers more than simply hospital costs. Developing distinct legislation will enable the government to enhance the effectiveness of the cost-recovery process, provide authority to recover health care treatment costs from convicted criminals when that person suffered an injury while committing an offence, and enable the province to seek to recover health care costs caused by the wrongful acts of tobacco manufacturers. This is important legislation because, Mr. Speaker, Alberta taxpayers should not be responsible for health care costs resulting from wrongful acts or omissions.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 48 read a first time]

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** 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 our written responses to questions raised by the opposition during the debate on Tourism, Parks and Recreation estimates on April 21.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of correspondence to the Liberal caucus from Steve Schembri, who is writing to express his dismay, shock, and disbelief with the direction the government has taken the Alberta drilling industry.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today, and it's the Qualitative Research Findings: Branding Alberta Message Testing Groups, January 2009. This is the focus group organized by Harris/Decima in various locations throughout Alberta and throughout the country and, I believe, across North America. It is noteworthy on page 10, hon. members, the photograph of the young couple in Northumberland in England. This is certainly not Sylvan Lake. It's not Slave Lake. It's a foreign photograph. It's interesting, to say the least, how the government once again tried to pull the wool over the eyes of Alberta taxpayers.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of tablings today. First off, I have letters from University of Alberta students Wayne Stelte, Ashlie Pratt, and Danielle Edge, all expressing their concern with the monopoly on ticket sales in Alberta and the lack of consumer protection.

Second, I want to present a letter from Alberta senior Tine Steen-Dekker and a second letter signed by 59 Albertans. They are all participants in the Edmonton General hospital's get fit program, which is designed to help seniors stay active and independent. They're writing because they're opposed to the cancellation of the program scheduled for the end of this month.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. First, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a summary of a report from the Council of Canadian Academies titled Sustainable Management of Groundwater in Canada, which I referred to in my questions today.

Secondly, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of 10 reports from long-term care workers indicating specific problems on shifts that were short-staffed. These indicate that some residents were left in bed until late in the day, did not receive any care until after lunch, and also that some lifting that required two staff members was done by only one.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, Minister of Finance and Enterprise, responses to questions raised by Mr. Taylor, hon. Member for Calgary-Currie; Dr. Taft, hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview; and Mr. Weadick, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, on April 22, 2009, Department of Finance and Enterprise main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Liepert, Minister of Health and Wellness, return to order of the Assembly MR 7 and MR 20, both asked for by Mr. Mason on April 6, 2009.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horner, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, responses to questions raised by Mr. MacDonald, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and Dr. Taft, hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, on April 28, 2009, department of advanced education main estimates debate.

2:50

### Orders of the Day

#### Motions for Returns

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

#### Lottery Fund Grant Announcements

M25. Ms Blakeman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all invitations sent to opposition Members of the Legislative Assembly for lottery fund grant announcements in the constituencies they represent and any photographs of these members taken at the events in question.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The history behind this particular motion for a return is that there have been lottery grant programs in Alberta, which, I will add and underline, are much valued by the NGO and voluntary sector. These have been in place for a significant period of time, not always in the exact configuration that they are today, but there have been grant programs that are disbursing lottery funds out to the NGO and voluntary sector based on criteria established by the government for some time.

For the same period of time, Mr. Speaker, the government has used the distribution of the cheques that go along with these various grants as a photo opportunity. Often we see those sort of door-sized cartoon cheques or photo op cheques that are handed out with everybody gathered around them, and the photo appears in the newspaper. We actually even got to a point in the last term where backbenchers' names were appearing on these big photo op cheques as though the individual backbencher had written the cheque out of their own account to give to a particular not-for-profit. When the Liberal opposition brought that to the attention of the government, eventually the Premier ordered that that practice was to stop, but a few months went by, and we're back to having the big cartoon cheques given away at the photo op again.

Recently we've had other examples of government MLAs that are writing in public documents that they have certain pots of money or money that is assigned to them or available to them. I've heard of two sets of money, one was \$750,000 and the other one was more than that, several million dollars, I think, depending on what the status is that they hold in the particular caucus.

But the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that we don't know. We get little glimpses of this, little pieces of this, but what we know in the Official Opposition is that we're never asked to hand out the cheque to groups that are in our constituency that receive the money, and we're not in the photo that goes out to the media. It's pretty carefully done by government to enhance government although this is supposed to be lottery money that often the local MLA, including the members of the Official Opposition and the third-party opposition, has supported and lobbied for and even written letters in support of.

We have examples of government MLAs saying that they have pots of money that they are responsible for giving out. We've even brought forward examples of government MLAs showing control over the grant amounts and over the timing of the grant amounts. That example was Foothills-Rocky View and their neighbouring constituency, Banff-Cochrane. That was \$1.5 million and \$1.5

million, for a combined \$3 million. So I guess that answers my colleague's question.

The government, when we've raised these issues, likes to refute this by saying: well, look at all the money that goes to the constituency in Edmonton-Centre; that disproves everything you've been saying. It actually doesn't, Mr. Speaker, because we've been saying that government MLAs have access to a pot of money that we don't, and saying that Edmonton-Centre agencies are getting money doesn't mean that I have any access to it. I'm certainly not invited to the photo op, and I don't get to put my name on the cheque. So I thought: well, you know, let's find out about this.

Just let me point out that Edmonton-Centre is home to the major arts facilities in the city that we all share in and enjoy, and frankly they should have that support. They are a reflection of our city and of our province. There also are major NGOs, our larger NGOs: Catholic Social Services, United Way, Big Brothers Big Sisters. Any number of large helping agencies also tend to be centred in the downtown core because that's where people are clustered, looking for those services.

As I said, we haven't been invited to these cheque handouts and the photo ops although the government says that somehow all things are equal, so I thought I'd ask, Mr. Speaker. I took advantage of the parliamentary process that's available with motions for a return and put it on the Order Paper some three weeks ago.

Now, timing is everything, Mr. Speaker, because on Thursday, just a mere two business days before this particular issue was going to come up in the Assembly today, the Liberal caucus got an invitation from staff in the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit's office 45 minutes before an event, inviting the Liberal MLAs to go to a cheque handout. I thought: well, that's really interesting except that the minister knew or should have known that, in fact, all of the Liberal opposition MLAs were going to be at a media conference 15 minutes before this started.

I say "should have known" because with the number of resources that are available to these government MLAs and particularly the minister through the Public Affairs Bureau, surely somebody checked to see if there was going to be any conflict with the minister's 11:45 media conference, anything around that time like, say, oh, an 11:30 a.m. media conference that was being hosted by the Liberal caucus. That media notice had gone out at 8:38 that morning, so a fair amount of notice had been given. It was certainly available for the minister and his staff, and being the excellent staff that I know them to be, I'm sure they checked, and they knew that we would all be standing in a little row in the basement of the Legislative Assembly doing our own media conference and that the likelihood that we would make it to fulfill the minister's obligation was slim to none aside from the fact that we'd actually been issued this invitation 45 minutes before the event was to take place. So even at that, that was pretty tight timing to have a number of MLAs reschedule things and be able to make it to this.

I suppose, strictly speaking – and I'll be really interested to see. I bet you money that that is going to end up being used as proof that the ministry is open and had always been willing to extend an invitation. But the timing of it certainly is very interesting. In my head I'm sort of classifying that as an attempt to race through the yellow light of the timing that is set by the motion for a return coming up. Unfortunately, because we had already scheduled something and there was public knowledge about our media conference, the minister got caught by the equivalent of a red-light camera.

I have moved that motion for a return. It is on the Order Paper. It is asking for copies of invitations and any photographs of our

members that were taken at the events in question. I look forward to the minister's response to Motion for a Return 25.

Thank you.

**Mr. Blakett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member loves to come up with these conspiracy theories, but the fact remains that all these lottery-funded programs, community investment programs, are government of Alberta programs. Last I checked, it was a Progressive Conservative government in Alberta, not the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, that administers these programs. We believe strongly that we should have an opportunity to have those individuals, those volunteer groups, those organizations who raised a lot of money, and those sponsors have recognition for that. So we have events, we invite the media to them, those volunteers get some recognition, and they're all very, very thankful.

In response and without a lot of preamble, the government is prepared to accept Motion for a Return 25 with amendments. I wish to propose an amendment to Motion for a Return 25 that would add a time frame to the request. Without a specific time frame this request is simply too broad. In addition, the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit is only just over a year old. With that in mind, I propose that the motion be amended to read:

Copies of all invitations sent to opposition Members of the Legislative Assembly for lottery fund grant announcements in the constituencies they represent from the date of inception of the ministry on March 12, 2008, to March 31, 2009, and any photographs of these members taken at the events in question.

Prior to 11 a.m. today, Mr. Speaker, I did share the proposed amendment to the motion for a return with the Member for Edmonton-Centre as per parliamentary procedures. I now request that the proposed amendment to Motion for a Return 25 be circulated to all members. I see that it appears on their desks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On the amendment the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Indeed. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to this amendment because I think there's a concept here. I recognize that we are dealing with a minister who has not been in place for a very long period of time. Nonetheless, there is quite a bit of paid staff and a great deal of experience from his colleagues in the House here that could have assisted him with this.

As I mentioned, these grant programs have been in existence for some time. They have been in other ministries at various times, but there certainly is a long history of these particular grant programs. I'll specify the community facility enhancement program and the community initiatives program, which was formerly the community lottery boards' money. Then when the lottery boards were disbanded, that money was rolled over into the community initiatives program, and the media at the time was quite clear in connecting those two, so I will connect them as well.

3:00

So here we have a minister who is saying: well, I'm only going to talk about this stuff from when my ministry was created and I was the minister for it. I would argue that that's inappropriate, Mr. Speaker. We have the parliamentary precedent ahead of us that's pretty clear, and I'll point you towards section 428(11) of *Beauchesne* – let me just dig that out for you – which acknowledges under the section on written questions that, you know, there's a long list of things which should and should not be done. It does acknowledge

under the (II) section: “seek from an ex-Minister information with regard to transactions during that person’s term of office.” That is always the standing rule in this Assembly.

For example, I cannot ask the current Minister of Environment what he did in his previous ministry of Municipal Affairs. That would be inappropriate. But, certainly, it would be expected that I could ask this minister something about policy that had been developed in the Ministry of Environment four and five years ago, when he was not minister. There is an expectation of institutional memory and institutional responsibility. As a matter of fact, it’s called ministerial responsibility. Ministers are expected to know this. They are supported by the staff, that give unbiased information to them. So to somehow say, “Well, no; I can only talk to you about what has happened in this ministry when I was minister” flies in the face of some fairly weighty tomes on parliamentary process here, that clearly say that the minister is responsible for the department they’re in and for all of the department they’re in back in history, not starting the day they took over.

If the Speaker would like, I also have references from *M and M* that I can dig out.

**The Speaker:** That’s not required.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** It is a point of ministerial responsibility that you go back in the department, as the hon. member has said. This is the debate now on a motion, please remember.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you so much. You are always so kind to me, Mr. Speaker.

So would I accept this motion? No. What I see in this amendment is an attempt – and I don’t know if this is true or not – to get out from answering the question that is a long-running issue in this Assembly. That is that the government members are given access to money that the rest of the members in this Assembly are not and that they are able to take advantage of that, some of them with very generous timing very close to election campaigns in ways that will advance their election likelihood, and that’s just wrong, plain old wrong.

Will I accept this amendment from the minister, attempting to amend my motion for a return, which was asking for information? Now, if he’d said, “This is too wide open; you can only go back five years” or one term or something, but to tie it specifically to when he took over that ministry I don’t think is appropriate. I think it does fly in the face of the parliamentary precedent that we have under the concept of ministerial responsibility.

So I would urge my colleagues in the Assembly to not support the amendment to curtail the time period in which the information should be handed over to me, the person requesting it. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much. I’m pleased to participate in the debate on Motion for a Return 25, as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, in particular the amendment as proposed by the hon. Minister of Cultural and Community Spirit. I don’t understand how this amendment could be presented to the Legislative Assembly, restricting and limiting this request to the period of time through March 12, 2008, until March 31, 2009. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is quite right.

I would remind the hon. member that the lottery funds are disbursed from the Department of the Solicitor General and Public Security. They have been for some time, to my knowledge. When you look at some of the programs that were available in the past, particularly in the run-up to the election, there was a lot of money spent, in excess, I would say, comfortably of \$400 million, in the Culture and Community Spirit program, specifically to programs which, if we were to accept this amended program, we would have no idea if any of us ever got an invitation or, if we did, if there was a photograph taken. I have no recollection of ever being invited. Now, I’m busy, I may have missed some of this, but I can’t think of ever being invited, Mr. Speaker.

If we look at the major community facilities program of \$140 million, which this year has been eliminated or omitted from the budget for obvious reasons, and if we go back to 2007-08 and take this amendment to Motion for a Return 25 as it’s worded, we would have no information on that major program. That’s \$140 million. After the big 72-seat majority is acquired, that’s conveniently eliminated.

Now, there are major fairs and exhibitions. Going back two years, they have a \$53 million allocation. It’s dropped to \$23 million in this budget year. We would have no record – we would be excluded – of the information regarding the lists and the invites and whatnot that the hon. member is seeking.

In conclusion, in the run-up to the provincial election there was significant money, millions and millions of dollars, spent through the lottery program, through various constituencies. I’m not saying that it’s good or that it’s bad. The fact is that you only have to look at the annual reports, and the AGLC is in the Solicitor General’s department, not in the hon. minister’s department.

**Ms Blakeman:** CFEP is in his department.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. That is correct.

But the money flows from the hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security through to various organizations. For the hon. member’s request we need all of the information, not just part of it. So much money was spent in the immediate past from the dates that the hon. minister is talking about here that I think we need to go back and get all of the invitations, not just the ones from the 12th . . .

**Ms Blakeman:** There aren’t any.

**Mr. MacDonald:** There are none?

**Ms Blakeman:** You didn’t get any. I didn’t get any. I don’t think there are any.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I didn’t get any, no. No, I did not. But I might have missed them. I don’t know. Certainly, I would like to point that out.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** If you can direct your thoughts through the chair, he’s kind of interested.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit credit for being so direct in his approach. While he’s only been the minister and elected since March 3, 2008, he’s quickly felt the sense of entitlement that this government has had for the last 40 years. He doesn’t have to get up to speed. He was running, and he’s there already.



Now, regardless of whether we receive the motion as amended or the original motion for a return, we know what the result is, Mr. Speaker: a big fat zero. The government has the feeling that it is their money that they are passing out to the constituencies regardless of whether they were elected to represent those constituencies. It's not taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker. It's something that they have stroked the golden goose, got the golden egg, exchanged it at the money market, and now out of their goodness – note the Premier's signature on the bottom of the cheque – it's theirs to do as they wish because they're the government. Well, guess what? It's the taxpayers' money. It's lottery money that has been earned from constituents throughout the province.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the minister leaving money behind and maybe a silver bullet like the Lone Ranger in Calgary-Varsity, for example, as he did in January, when he provided \$10,000 for a community rink, which I'm very much in support of, but until I saw the minister's smiling face in the Calgary-Varsity newsletter, *Varsity Acres – Varsity Voice* is the name of the document – I had no understanding that this wonderful generosity of the lottery grants had been awarded to the constituents of Calgary-Varsity. Now, I'm very pleased that they received it. I would have even been more pleased if the minister had indicated that something that I had lobbied for and supported my constituents for some time in the receipt of finally arrived.

This business of the government believing that it is their money and therefore they can do with it what they like – and then we have this amended motion, which basically does the Orwellian thing of trying to erase history, the whole business of he who controls the past controls the future. Well, here's another example. Get out the large daub of whiteout. However, in this case it doesn't really matter because we weren't invited, we've never been invited, and if this government continues in power, we probably never will be.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, let's find out. Maybe they've got something.

**Mr. Chase:** As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre says: well, let's find out. Maybe the invitation that was through Canada Post is in the mail, and somehow the Pony Express never made it to our constituency offices.

It's ridiculous that the government thinks that lottery money is their own sole possession to dole out as they wish to try and undermine the constituencies of those members who are not government members. We're all elected to do our jobs, to represent our constituents to the best of our abilities, and when the government throws arguments: well, do you want us to take back the grant? Of course not. We just want to be considered as the elected members of being worthy, whether we're elected as opposition or not, to be a part of that celebration, which to date has not occurred.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Others?

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Speaker:** We're back now to the debate on the motion as amended. Anyone want to discuss further?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, do you wish to conclude debate, or should I just call the question?

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, I am interested to see what we're going to get here, Mr. Speaker, because I think we've been pretty clear, and we've tried over a number of years to raise this issue. This just does

not pass the test. I don't think it passed the ethical test, that the government is helping itself to a funding source which it then uses to advance its own cause. I don't think that passes an ethical test. I don't think it passes a moral test. Certainly, the responses I've had from people that have read my comments in this House around this issue go: "We had no idea that was going on. This is not right." They feel that the government is using this as a slush fund, and it's inappropriate.

Let me be really clear here, Mr. Speaker. I don't think anybody in this House would say that the groups don't deserve this money. I think they do. I think it's the manner in which the government chooses to control the amounts that the groups are getting, the timing that they're getting it, and the way that it's being handed out. It's meant to aggrandize the government members, and it's inappropriate.

I think the final test is the mom test, and I don't think it's passing the mom test either. I think that what is contemplated here is sneaky and underhanded. It's meant to deceive. It's meant to make the constituents that live in constituencies that have a nongovernment member believe that their member isn't working hard for them. I know that's wrong. I think it is wrong. It doesn't pass any of those tests. The bottom line is that what the government is doing here is inappropriate.

I'm going to continue to raise this issue. Why I put this motion for a return there was to get them to step up and show us these invitations. At one point it was heckled back to me in response to one of my questions: oh, we've invited you guys before. Really? Let's see it. If it's on the level of what we got out of this minister's office on Thursday, I think that's going to tell us a whole bunch. If we end up with other invitations that got lost in the mail or that never got there or were delivered after the event happened, that's going to tell us a whole bunch more about how the government is handling the distribution of these lottery-based funds through the grant programs.

Just as a final point, I think it's disrespectful. It disrespects the number of people who chose to vote in someone who wasn't a government member. I think that's where it's disrespectful, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to receiving the information about the invitations that were given to us. I will see where it goes from there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 25 as amended lost]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 203

#### Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and open Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the local authorities election amendment act. I would like to thank my colleagues from both sides of this House for sharing their thoughts and concerns during second reading. I would also like to quickly review the primary components of Bill 203.

This bill was designed to be a unifying piece of legislation that would provide clear and fair local election regulations for campaign finances that would be consistent province-wide. It would mirror rules that already apply in provincial elections and would be similar to legislation already enacted in Ontario, B.C., and Quebec. It has four main elements. First, it would apply a \$5,000 limit on contributions from any one individual, corporation, trade union, or employee organization. This limit was designed to ensure that all Albertans regardless of personal wealth were able to play a meaningful role in the electoral process.

Second, Bill 203 would require all candidates to file disclosure statements with the municipality following the conclusion of an election. These statements would be made publicly available and must include the names and addresses of those contributors who donate more than \$100 to a candidate as well as record the total dollar value of all contributions \$100 or less. Mr. Chairman, disclosure statements ensure public confidence and can also protect candidates from insinuations or outright accusations of undue influence.

Third, Bill 203 would provide clear guidelines for the handling of surplus campaign funds following an election. Candidates who record surplus campaign funds exceeding \$500 would be required to pay the amount of that surplus to the municipality to be held in trust for the candidate for their use in the following election. Should the candidate choose not to run in the subsequent election, the surplus funds held in trust may be directed to a registered charity by that candidate. These measures protect the contributor and ensure that contributions are used for their intended purpose, the municipal election campaign of the candidate.

**3:20**

Fourth, finally, Bill 203 clearly identifies who is eligible and ineligible to donate to a municipal campaign. The list of prohibited organizations is mirrored from the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act with a few minor relevant alterations, including prohibiting donations from municipally owned corporations and nonprofits who have received recent municipal grants.

These provisions are designed to build upon the commendable efforts of municipalities across Alberta and ensure that all Albertans can expect the same level of transparency, fairness, and accountability in their municipal and provincial elections regardless of where they live.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to take this opportunity to address some of the specific questions brought forward by my hon. colleagues during second reading. I thank the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs for his question regarding whether I had thought to extend Bill 203 to include school division trustees or trustee elections. I would like to state that no provision in Bill 203 precludes such a regulation from being explored or implemented in the future, but because Bill 203 is a private member's bill, I believe it's important for it to have a narrow scope of focus. This is to ensure proper consultation as well as thorough debate and, possibly most important, to maximize its chance of success. Since this is the case, I did not include them within the scope of this bill at this time. I believe that extending its measures to school trustee elections could be a worthy item for discussion at a future date.

Another important question raised by the hon. members for Edmonton-Strathcona and Edmonton-Gold Bar relates to a key provision of Bill 203, the proposed contribution limit of \$5,000. As members of this Assembly we are aware that Alberta's Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act establishes contribution limits to political parties, constituency associations, and registered candidates during and between election campaign periods. Section

17(1) limits contributions to local constituency associations to \$1,000 in a year that is not an election year. Furthermore, it limits contributions to a registered candidate during an election year to \$2,000. Mr. Chairman, this means that over a three- to four-year term the maximum any donor can contribute to any one provincial candidate's campaign is approximately \$5,000. The \$5,000 limit was set, again, to mirror the opportunities that currently exist for a provincial candidate. It was selected after consultation with the AUMA and the AAMD and C as well as widespread discussion with some of my many members of caucus who have valuable municipal experience.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona questioned why contributions are higher for provincial candidates. They are not. As I have described, they are consistent with each other and were set through careful consultation but certainly could be adjusted, if warranted, in the future.

Another question brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall and others relates to the matter of making contributions tax deductible. Mr. Chairman, I believe this is a notable suggestion. No provision of Bill 203 precludes such a measure from being explored or implemented in the future. Once again, this relates to keeping the scope of this private member's bill focused on aspects that are achievable in the short term. We also would need serious consultation on who would fund such a tax credit. This potential tax credit is an idea that would need more in-depth consideration and wider consultation with stakeholders and affected ministries. I prefer to propose that the four essential elements of the bill proceed first.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East addressed the matter of surplus funds and whether those funds would be available should a candidate or councillor choose to run for election at another level of government. Section 147.05(4) of Bill 203 requires candidates who choose not to run in a future municipal election to direct surplus funds left over from the prior election to a registered charitable organization as defined by section 149.1(1) of the Canada Income Tax Act, or it will become revenue for the local municipality. A candidate may only use prior held surplus funds under the condition that he or she chooses to run in the subsequent municipal election. Therefore, a candidate who chooses to run for office in another level of government may not use surplus funds held from a prior municipal election campaign.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to address questions that a number of hon. members raised in regard to trade unions. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity suggested that Bill 203 disenfranchises members of particular unions. Furthermore, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East questioned whether members of a union in addition to their organization could contribute to a municipal candidate. I'd like to state that Bill 203 was designed to ensure that all contributors – be they individuals, trade unions, corporations, employee organizations – are treated fairly and equally. To this end, it mirrors existing legislation governing provincial elections.

In conclusion, I'd like to address a particular concern raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. The member suggested that trade unions and corporations were being treated differently under Bill 203 due to their respective definitions. She noted that whereas section 147.01 deems all locals of a trade union to be one trade union, no such restriction exists for corporations and those corporations associated with it. I would like to assure the hon. member that it was the intention of Bill 203 to mirror the provincial legislation in this regard.

As such, I'm pleased to move an amendment to Bill 203 that will address this potential discrepancy. Its language is identical to existing provisions within Alberta's Election Finances and Contribu-

tions Disclosure Act with respect to corporate donors. This amendment essentially says that for the purpose of the contribution limit of \$5,000 all corporations associated with each other are treated as one corporation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to debate on Bill 203 and the proposed amendment and thank all the hon. members for their careful consideration.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, this will be amendment A1. We'll just pause for a moment to make sure that it's passed out.

Hon. members, we'll be debating amendment A1. Any members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you for the opportunity. As I indicated when Bill 203 first came up, I am in support of this piece of legislation, and I thank the hon. mover of the bill, the Member for Athabasca-Redwater. I also support the clarification provided in his amendment. I believe that in previous debate I pointed out that the idea of limiting the influence, whether it be of corporations or unions or individuals, is something that came out of the Liberal government under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

The purpose of the amendment and its clarification spells out just exactly that. For example, take CUPE. It has various locals, but the entire organization would only be allowed a certain amount. Likewise, there are several subcompanies within a larger company that previously could potentially have given donations within their subcompany status, whereas this particular amendment, A1, clarifies that. Therefore, I'm very much in support of it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. On the amendment. This amendment is in section 3 of the proposed Bill 203. Certainly, if I'm to understand this correctly, it is changing the definition of a corporation in the federal Income Tax Act. I still have questions, and I can understand where the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is coming from because of the existing definition for trade unions.

The hon. member submitting this amendment suggested that this would level the playing field. Now, one has to look at the definition of corporations associated with section 256 of the Income Tax Act. That is certainly interesting. Section 256(1) of the Income Tax Act of Canada shall read as though the words "at any time in the year" were struck out.

3:30

Now, are we capturing associated corporations with this definition as I understand it? When we compare this to a trade union, Mr. Chairman, we would be looking at – let's pick the AUPE as an example – where for the purposes of this Bill 203 all locals of a trade union in Alberta are deemed to be in one trade union. So there would be lots of locals of the AUPE scattered throughout the province, but they're to be deemed by this legislation to be captured in the same definition, as I understand that.

Now, if I understand correctly, the definition of associated corporations here in the Income Tax Act is that

For the purposes of this Act, one corporation is associated with another in a taxation year if, at any time in the year,

- (a) one of the corporations controlled, directly or indirectly in any manner whatever, the other;
- (b) both of the corporations were controlled, directly or indirectly in any manner whatever, by the same person or group of persons;

and it goes on and on.

There's also section 256(1.1), the definition of a specified class, and 256(1.2). Under this amendment, as I understand this, they would all be applicable, would they not? Perhaps I can get an answer to that from the hon. member before we proceed any further, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Chair:** Do any other members wish to speak?

Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Chairman, I had directed a question to the hon. member, and I was hoping to get a response before we go any further.

**Mr. Johnson:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member for his question. The amendment and the Income Tax Act of Canada are fairly clear. As I stated in the introduction to the amendment, the amendment is brought forward to mirror exactly what we have in our Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. It has always been the intent of this bill that it would not create a greater burden on municipal elections than we have on ourselves at the provincial elections. So what we've done is take the exact language right out of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act and plopped that into this bill. The member is correct in that the intent of this is that every corporation that's associated with each other would be considered one corporation for the purpose of contributions, just like every union local associated with each other would be considered one entity for the purpose of a donation.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. I appreciate that response from the hon. member. Now, I don't know how this legislation or even this amendment, Mr. Chairman, can be policed. There is a shortage of resources as it is at Elections Alberta. The former Elections Alberta CEO, or Chief Electoral Officer, certainly indicated on the public record and suggested that there is a Wild West of accounting here with contributions. There are very few rules.

I would like to know how the hon. member plans to enforce this amendment if it is to become law. How is this going to work in light of the very disappointing statements from an individual who was in charge of not only this act but Elections Alberta for a period of three-plus years? That individual had very little confidence that the system worked. Now that we are providing this amendment to this legislation – we will see where it goes in the House – how, precisely, is this going to work?

Thank you.

**Mr. Johnson:** Mr. Chair, the question on who is going to police this amendment and the bill itself, for that matter, is a good question, but there aren't a lot of resources required to police this. This is going to be policed essentially by the public. This is just a disclosure for the public. Once these things are made public and accessible by the public, then, of course, if we see some serious violations, it would be up to the prosecutor's office to decide whether they would move forward on those. The intent is not to create a whole mechanism to police this. This is just about proper disclosure to the public.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Yes. Thank you. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has raised an important concern. This is a terrific amend-

ment, A1. I'm very supportive of it. I'm supportive of the bill, as I've previously indicated. But there were 18 infractions that were pointed out as a result of the last provincial election, and the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo continuously approached the hon. Minister of Justice about looking into the 18 infractions. Therefore, with potential infractions that occur in the future, even though we're trying to tighten up the regulations and bring them into line with provincial legislation, what assurances can be provided that the intent of this terrific amendment will actually be able to be governed and followed up not only by Elections Alberta, which, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar indicated, brought up over 150 concerns that needed to be dealt with, never mind the 18 infractions?

I would look forward to an explanation of how, going beyond this terrific amendment, we can actually make sure that it gets legislated and enforced. How will the rules be changed to make sure that the rules that previously weren't followed are now more closely followed as a result of this improved legislation?

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak on the amendment?

If not, I will call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** On the bill as amended, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Whenever we debate any, you know, private member's bill in this Assembly, we have to be mindful of two rather significant pieces of legislation that have passed the Assembly here in the last number of years, and both of them – I don't know who in the government has been reluctant to proclaim them. I'm not going to suggest for a minute it's the President of the Treasury Board because I know he likes tax cuts as well as the next person.

The first bill that I would bring to the Assembly's attention is a private member's bill that was passed. The former Member for Strathcona had a bill, and it was a good bill, to give tradespersons a break when they were first buying their tools or upgrading their tools. It was a tax credit. Many people, including this hon. member and even many government members, thought that this bill had become law and started to talk about it and encourage taxpayers to access this. Some auto or heavy-duty mechanics spend thousands of dollars annually. Some of them have \$35,000, \$45,000 worth of tools that they take with them daily in their work. They thought that this was going to be a tax credit. But the government has refused to do anything about it.

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, of course, last year had proposed a tax credit for individuals who were active, or exercising.

3:40

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, we're talking about the bill.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I'm certainly talking about that. You bet I am. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Now, when we look at what the Member for Calgary-Lougheed had suggested, it has not been passed into law. It's even mentioned in this year's fiscal plan, that for whatever reason we can't afford that tax credit.

So there are two examples, two recent examples, of private members' business getting the nod from the Legislative Assembly, from all members regardless of which party affiliation, and the bill not becoming a law of the province.

This legislation I have many questions about. I'm not so sure about this legislation. Certainly, I would like to see restrictions and limitations put on campaign donations. In my view, Mr. Chairman, if your name is not on the voters list, you can't donate. If it is on the voters list, you cannot donate, in my view, any more than \$500. That certainly would eliminate trade unions. That would eliminate all corporations from making contributions. One only has to look at the disclosure statements of any political party to see that at certain times there is significant interest by respective or interested parties in donating money.

One group that I notice lately is very, very anxious to donate money, not to this party and certainly not to the New Democrats but to the government party, is outfits that are promoting the atomic reactors. All of a sudden in the last two to three years I see where they've become very generous to the Progressive Conservative Party. Never heard from them in the past that I could recall, but lately they seem to be very generous, and they seem to be very anxious to go to Premier's dinners and hear what the Premier has to say and pay a significant amount of money for that privilege.

Good records and good disclosure records are very important. I don't think we have the resources nor the political will to enforce this, for starters. I can appreciate where the hon. member is certainly coming from. When we look at the prosecutions that have been ignored by officials from Justice, I can see why the former Chief Electoral Officer was so frustrated. He investigated, made suggestions, thought that prosecutions would proceed through the system and that innocence or guilt would be determined. That didn't happen. That didn't happen for whatever reason, whether it's with the Ministry of Justice or with the RCMP up by Kingsway Avenue. No charges were ever laid. I had an issue in our constituency of people toting around a ballot box in the election from room to room in a series of seniors' apartments.

So there are issues, and I can see why members would be skeptical of this bill. It's a good idea, but do we have the ability to enforce this, Mr. Chairman? That is the question that we must determine before we vote on this. Why the different tiers – this still puzzles me – regarding donations and campaign amounts? We know there's a different donation level at the provincial level, whether it's \$15,000 or \$30,000 during a campaign period, and that can be divided up between a party and the party's respective candidates. Why would there be two sets of rules, as I understand it, one for us whenever we ask for money as either an individual candidate or a political party and people who are running in supposedly a local authorities election? Like, why the two standards here?

Now, I would be interested at this point, Mr. Chairman, to also get an explanation of the campaign period. My understanding of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act is that in this act there are different rules for the campaign period. Is that because the act that governs local elections is different than the Election Act for the province? I suspect that has something to do with it, but I'm not sure. If I could have that clarified, I would be really grateful. I'm also interested in – and it's something that I support – the campaign surpluses and the distribution of those surpluses if an individual candidate does not run at a future time.

Other than that and the questions I had, I had a few discussions with various labour groups regarding this legislation. Some, such as the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, are not allowed to make donations to political parties. Others that do make donations thought that the fact that they would be lumped together as one union regardless of how many local unions they had throughout the province was an act to restrict and limit their ability. They may want to support some of their members who seek office at the municipal level, and they thought this would restrict and limit their ability to support their members.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for his initiative here and his diligence in responding to our questions and concerns. I really appreciate that. Thanks.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my pleasure to rise today to discuss Bill 203, the Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009. Again, I'd like to congratulate my good friend and colleague the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for bringing forward such a timely and well-written, well-drafted piece of legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that this bill has advanced to this stage of the legislative process as it allows me the opportunity to specifically address an important section of Bill 203, section 147.03, which relates to the management of campaign financing. This section defines guidelines to improve upon our fair and open municipal electoral system, especially with provisions (a), (b), and (c) regarding campaign accounts. Indeed, these provisions aim to strengthen the documentation of financial activities throughout a municipal election campaign. As elected officials the members of this Assembly are well aware of the necessary guidelines and regulations for provincial elections. We understand their purpose in ensuring a fair and reasonable democratic process.

3:50

The provisions under section 147.03 encourage an open process and allow for those who have contributed resources, financial or otherwise, to know that there are checks and balances in place. To elaborate further, section 147.03, provision (a), establishes that "a campaign account is opened at a financial institution for the purposes of the election campaign and in the name of the candidate's election campaign." The opening of a campaign account at an accredited financial institution ensures that a responsible mechanism for recording the deposits and withdrawals of a campaign fund is established. Additionally, opening an account in the name of the candidate works to ensure that candidates and their campaign organizers are directing electoral contributions to the person for whom they are intended.

Those involved with political campaigns will acknowledge how important it is to have a legitimate method for documenting and recording financial activities. This method of responsible documentation is supported in section 147.03(1)(b) as it states that a candidate shall ensure "all contributions of money are deposited into the campaign account." All these provisions work to support more accountable election campaigns and the responsible use of political contributions.

There have been recent examples in other jurisdictions in which a lack of such guidelines has allowed individuals to use political contributions in a way that we would find inappropriate. I would like to note one story of an elected U.S. official who took advantage of the absence of clear campaign disclosure laws. After losing an election campaign, this individual was able to keep a campaign account active. This, then, enabled the former Senator to use funds that had been contributed in good faith for his previous election bids at his own discretion. In this particular case the individual, who was no longer an elected official, used his campaign funds to lobby with an influential government relations firm. His leftover campaign funds were used to campaign to members of Congress and presidential candidates and to pay family members excessively high wages for accounting services.

While these practices are not common, nor have they been deemed

illegal, amazingly enough, in this particular circumstance they exemplify the potential for questionable conduct if guidelines are not established for the use of campaign accounts. Mr. Chairman, it is reasonable to assume that those individuals who donated to this Senator's campaign had intended for their money to be used for election purposes only and not be retained and allotted for alternative purposes later on.

This brings me to the next important provision of section 147.03, provision (1)(c), which reads as follows: "money in the campaign account shall only be used for the payment of campaign expenses." With this clause we are setting a standard for appropriate financial operations of campaigns. If stipulations are absent, it can again potentially lead to practices in which campaign contributions are misused. Campaign account guidelines support adequate documentation of the amount of campaign money received and spent. This will only enhance the accuracy of financial statements and ensure that Alberta's municipal election laws align more closely with other jurisdictions.

For example, in the United States the Federal Election Commission rules prohibit campaign funds from being used for personal uses. We have also legislated similar guidelines for provincial elections, requiring the chief financial officer of a registered party, constituency association, or candidate to ensure contributions are placed in a depository on record with the Chief Electoral Officer.

I believe these are appropriate and necessary practices, and I am encouraged that we are proposing these steps for all of Alberta's municipalities in order to improve the operations and accounting of municipal election campaigns. These improvements will support and complement election rules and guidelines already implemented in many of Alberta's cities, counties, towns, and villages. This legislation is, again, another example of this government's commitment to assessing areas where we can work to strengthen elections in Alberta and improve the health of our democracy. Under the direction of the hon. Premier our government remains committed to governing with integrity and transparency, so we will continue to assess areas where we as a government can implement democratic reforms that will work to support an open and transparent regulated election system.

Bill 203 proposes changes to the current Local Authorities Election Act that I believe are essential to improving municipal election campaigns. As such, I am proud and honoured to give my full and enthusiastic support for Bill 203 and wholeheartedly encourage my colleagues to join me in doing so.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Again, I appreciate the fact that the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater has worked so hard to bring a degree of consistency into electoral reform in Alberta. I appreciate the fact that in the A1 amendment, for example, the hon. creator of the bill, the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater, referenced federal regulation as a precedent. I think federal electoral regulations, actually, are one step up in terms of the tightness of the regulations from our provincial, but I think that provincial regulations are several steps above the current circumstance with regard to municipal financing. I guess we've got to start somewhere, and this is kind of the middle ground. As such, I support it.

I share some of the concerns that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Goldwater – Gold Bar; the American references earlier were distracting me. Barry Goldwater from Edmonton-Gold Bar. Okay. It is important that transparency and accountability, especially

during the electoral process, be first in mind, and I'm hopeful that we'll be able to come up with the transparent regulations behind the enforcement of this Bill 203, Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009.

In my own personal circumstance I've been very fortunate in the last two elections, 2004 and again in 2008, to have my daughter's mother-in-law be my chief financial officer. She, with her background in finance, does everything with such a fine-tooth comb that it would be impossible to find any omissions, never mind violations. It's that type of accuracy and transparency that will improve the municipal electoral system.

I am hopeful that this bill will not only go forward but will be enforced at whichever time the next municipal election will occur. I guess that's about two years from this October. There have been discussions in terms of bringing municipal elections in line with provincial elections in the sense that instead of the three-year period, you know, also having municipal elections be along the same four-year approximate cycle. But this legislation at least provides that groundwork.

I very much like the provisions with regard to the money after the campaign either going to a charitable institution of choice or directly to the city's finances. I think that way we have a sense that this money is going to benefit a wider array of individuals or the city itself rather than the individual who is elected.

I also am in support of Bill 203. I would like to mention the fact that the people who supported me in the last two elections were very aware of the machine that I was facing. In both cases while the amount I was able to raise was dwarfed by that of my Conservative competitors, a spending of 3 to 1 by comparison in both 2004 and 2008, people saw beyond the dollars and looked at the product. What this is doing is making it less dependent on how well you can fund raise and more dependent on the services you provide. As a result, it makes it a much more level playing field for all involved, and I appreciate, again, the Member for Athabasca-Redwater with Bill 203 levelling the playing field so that anyone who has a good idea or foresight, strength of character is not disabled by an individual's corporate or union or influential considerations.

Again, thank you, hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater, for bringing forward this particular bill and allowing the best individual, whether they be man or woman, to proceed without undue influence in their pursuit of democratic representation. Thank you.

4:00

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my sincere pleasure to rise today and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009, brought forward by the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater. I congratulate the member on this bill. Bill 203 is an important piece of legislation that will have a resounding benefit for the municipal elections process in Alberta, and I thank the member for sponsoring it.

For the purpose of this Committee of the Whole debate I would like to draw attention to section 147.04(1). This section is instrumental in achieving the transparency that Bill 203 seeks to promote for municipal elections in Alberta. First, section 147.04(1) specifies that a candidate must file their disclosure statements in a prescribed form by March 1 following the election, and in the case of a by-election disclosure statements must be filed no more than 120 days following the by-election date. These reporting deadlines are a vital component to Bill 203. It ensures that all candidates operate under

the same timeline requirements, thereby promoting fairness in the process. In addition, these deadlines ensure that campaign disclosure statements are all readily available at an expected time for review by anyone who wishes to access them.

While it is important that campaign disclosure statements are timely and accessible, it is also important that they contain the proper information about election campaign finances. I know that that matters to the members of this House. Thus section 147.04(1) also specifies what is to be included in those statements. First, as per item (a) the aggregate amount of all individual contributions not exceeding \$100 must be reported. For these contributions, Mr. Chairman, the identities of contributors do not need to be reported. While a number of contributions of a hundred dollars or less can add up, these smaller amounts are generally not of overbearing concern, and since there is typically no concentrated source for these amounts of money, they will be forgone. Rather, it is likely a number of individuals and separate entities; this is a distinction from a large contribution from one person or corporate entity.

As per item (1)(b) of the same section, Mr. Chairman, both the amount contributed and the contributor's name and address are to be reported if their contribution or the aggregate amount of multiple contributions exceeds \$100 during the campaign period. In many ways this requirement is the pillar of Bill 203. The transparency that Bill 203 promotes is largely dependent on the disclosure of large contribution amounts and the identity of the contributors. With this information being clear and accessible within a predefined time frame, voters will ultimately have a broader range of information, which they can use to make an informed decision when they go to the polls, about the candidates that are running for office. Moreover, this increased transparency will also help candidates, insulating them from misinformed accusations of misconduct, which we are wont to hear at some point, and allowing their campaign to demonstrate and document practices of accountability and openness, which matters to this government.

Mr. Chairman, with the reporting requirements set out in section 147.04(1), I am confident that Bill 203 will be of great value to the democratic process in Alberta's municipalities. The transparency that would accommodate the reporting requirement could go a long way in the minds of voters, ultimately increasing confidence amongst the electorate.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the last item in section 147.04(1), item (c), specifies that the prescribed forms for disclosure statements must also specify a list of campaign expenses. This is intended to promote accountability by demonstrating that the contributions collected are being used for the intended purpose and for the reason that they were raised in the first place. This strengthens not only the electorate's confidence but also the confidence of contributors. I would expect that if contributors can be reassured that their dollars are being used for the purposes that they intended – that is, to directly fund their preferred candidate's campaign – then they can continue to contribute in the future, and that's an important part of democracy. Moreover, this sort of environment, one of accountability and transparency, should promote others to contribute, those perhaps who would not otherwise be inclined to support a municipal election campaign.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 203's intent is to promote accountability and transparency in the municipal election process across Alberta. Section 147.04(1) is instrumental in achieving this as it specifies the requirements for campaign finance disclosure statements, including deadlines and reporting requirements. Indeed, some municipalities have already led the way in implementing various campaign finance disclosure requirements. Bill 203 and section 147.04(1) in particular will help standardize such requirements for all municipalities. It

provides a clear framework within which municipal election campaigns can file disclosure statements so as to make this information more open and accessible. These provisions will benefit both candidates in municipal elections and municipalities overall.

To conclude, I fully support this bill and believe that its measures, specifically the ones I've emphasized, are instrumental to the long-term success of Alberta's municipal election process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise in support of Bill 203. I brought some concerns before. One of them was addressed by the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater. That was to make these donations tax deductible.

I agree with the Member for Calgary-Elbow. I think donations under a hundred dollars should all be reported. I would like to take it a step further. I think all contributions should be payable by cheque only so there's a track record of who contributes to these campaign funds. This bill will make municipal elections more transparent and candidates more accountable.

This way, you know, everybody can contribute \$99, and we won't know who contributed to the campaign fund. We will only know how much money was collected. I think it's leaving a little bit of room for abuse the way the bill stands right now. I think we should go all the way and look at the bill thoroughly and correct everything once and for all so that we won't have to go back to do another sweep at the bill to fix it.

Overall, you know, it's a good bill. I support it, but I think we should get into the nitty-gritty of things. Then we should fix all those little loopholes which may be left by passing this bill.

With those comments, I still support the bill, but I think we should, you know, comb it a little more thoroughly and fix it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to rise in the House today to participate in the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009. This bill is designed to ensure accountability and transparency for Alberta's municipal elections by regulating the size of campaign contributions, by creating a clear directive for surplus funds, and by ensuring full public disclosure of campaign finances.

Mr. Chairman, an integral part of Bill 203 is section 147.02 as it establishes limitations on contributions to municipal campaigns. The last two parts of this section, part (4) and part (5), are of particular importance as they define the consequences of a contravention of these rules. Mr. Chairman, section 147.02(4) reads, "A corporation, trade union or employee organization that contravenes this section is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$10 000." Additionally, part (5) reads, "A person who contravenes this section is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of up to \$5000."

The contribution limitation rules to which these two parts refer are parts (1), (2), and (3) of section 147.02. These three parts specifically ensure that donors do not contribute more than \$5,000 in any campaign period, that the candidate who contributes to his own campaign is considered a donor and is subject to the same \$5,000 limitation, and ensures that those who donate are, in fact, eligible to do so under the act.

4:10

Parts (4) and (5) ensure that these provisions can be enforced and therefore are imperative to Bill 203's effectiveness. In essence, they ensure that individuals or groups of individuals will not have undue influence over candidates. Part (4) establishes a \$10,000 penalty for any corporation, trade union, or employee organization that contravenes the contribution limitation. Bill 203's definition of a trade union is aligned with Alberta's Labour Relations Code, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, and the Canada Labour Code. It therefore includes any organization of employees that has a written constitution, rules, or bylaws and has as one of its objectives the regulation of relations between employers and employees and holds bargaining rights for employees in Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, some employee organizations are not actually designated as trade unions. However, Bill 203 includes these groups as well, referring to them as employee organizations and defines one of them as an organization that is not designated as a trade union but that bargains collectively for employees in Alberta. Together these definitions ensure that all employee groups are accounted for under Bill 203.

Furthermore, because part (4) is inclusive of corporations, it ensures that all organizations representing employees as well as incorporated businesses and not-for-profit organizations are accounted for in legislation. Ultimately, section 147.02 enables these entities to continue to support the municipal electoral process through contribution, while part (4) makes certain that these donations do not exceed a certain amount. If any of these entities do in fact exceed the \$5,000 donation limit, the legislation is clear that they are guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of up to \$10,000.

Part (5) of section 147.02, Mr. Chairman, is similar to part (4), except it pertains to persons or individuals as opposed to corporations or groups that represent employees. Part (5), therefore, ensures that persons, as they are defined in the act, are limited to contributions of \$5,000. Because the legislative definition of a person under Bill 203 includes a candidate or any other individual, this part makes certain that no one single person can make an excessive donation to a municipal campaign. Furthermore, the definition of a person under Bill 203 also includes "an organization other than a corporation, employee organization or trade union." Therefore, part (5) ensures enforceability of contribution limitations for unincorporated organizations and other groups who may choose to donate to a campaign. It is clear under Bill 203 that if any of these persons or organizations do contribute to a municipal campaign in excess of the \$5,000 contribution limit, they are guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of up to \$5,000.

Altogether, Mr. Chairman, the wording of section 147.02 strikes a balance that secures the ability of these entities to remain engaged in municipal politics while making certain that donations are a reasonable size and do not exceed \$5,000. This is true specifically for parts (4) and (5), which establish penalties for entities that contravene this section and ultimately ensure compliance with this act.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 203 is a positive step in maintaining fairness, transparency, and accountability in the election process for Alberta municipalities. I therefore stand before the Assembly to support Bill 203 and commend the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for his hard work and diligence in bringing forward this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you wish to speak?

**Ms Notley:** No.

**The Deputy Chair:** Then I'll call the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise today and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009. We've heard some good speakers today, and this legislation, I submit to you, would ensure province-wide transparency and accountability measures for municipal elections. I'd like to commend the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for bringing forward this thoughtful and constructive piece of legislation. I think he has done a very excellent job on this.

As legislators we must ensure that elections at all levels of government are conducted with the highest degree of transparency and accountability. Specifically, I would like to discuss section 147.05 of this bill. This section provides clear guidelines for municipal governments and candidates as to the usage of surplus campaign funds following an election. Some people have asked me: why do we need to do this municipally? Well, the difference is that federally or with our Assembly you have party structures that can hold the money and can take it then to the next election. Obviously, we don't have that municipally. I don't think, actually, that there's anything that prohibits parties, but they're not formally associated in this province.

Section 147.05(1) requires candidates who disclose statements to show a surplus exceeding \$500 to pay the excess amount to the municipality. This subsection is essential in ensuring the effectiveness of Bill 203 as it provides a clear directive for the handling of surplus funds totalling more than \$500.

Section 147.05(2), conversely, outlines the responsibilities of the municipality following the receipt of surplus funds from the candidate. Bill 203 directs municipalities to hold the money in trust for the candidate at a financial institution. In this way, Mr. Chair, Bill 203 protects the candidate by ensuring that his or her surplus funds will be held in a responsible manner. Thus candidates may have full confidence in this legislation and the municipal government for which they choose to run for office. In addition, it protects municipalities by providing them with strict guidelines on where to direct the funds. Municipalities may have full confidence that the surplus funds will be held and safeguarded at a major financial institution as protected by the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 203 also provides clear direction as to when candidates may collect funds that have been held in trust. I would draw the attention of this Assembly to section 147.05(3), which reads:

If the person in respect of whom the money is held under subsection (2) files nomination papers to be a candidate in the next general election or in a by-election called before that time, the municipality shall pay the money and interest calculated at the rate prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the candidate for use in that election.

With interest rates these days it's probably only a few cents, but they could rise in the future.

Mr. Chairman, this provision is important for several reasons. First, it provides municipalities and municipal candidates specific guidelines as to when surplus monies from a prior election may be used in the future. It is clearly indicated that surplus funds may only be returned to a candidate should they choose to file nomination papers and run in the subsequent municipal election. Indeed, if this provision was not clearly stated, it would be unclear as to when the candidates would be eligible to get surplus funds from a prior election.

Second, subsection (3) clearly states that the money shall be returned to the candidate with interest at a rate determined by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, as I mentioned. Essentially, Mr. Chair, subsection (3) provides clear direction to the municipality on when to return surplus funds collected from the last election. These funds may only be returned to the candidate should they, again, file nomination papers for the next subsequent election. Should they fail to do so, section 147.05(4) ensures that the candidate can direct the municipality to donate surplus funds to a registered charitable organization.

Mr. Chairman, public confidence in municipal elections is essential to ensuring strong communities, and I'm proud to say that numerous municipalities have spearheaded strong campaign finance legislation. Bill 203 proposes to build upon their efforts and to provide a single uniform set of regulations for all municipalities in Alberta. I believe that the regulation of surplus funds is essential to ensuring accountability on behalf of municipal candidates and those who contribute to their campaigns.

**4:20**

As I mentioned earlier, in a different level of government, if you are running for MLA or MP, you'd run into a situation where your constituency or riding association could hold any surplus funds for use in the mid term or leading up to the next election. Again, though, unlike in provinces like British Columbia and Quebec, which have party structures through municipal candidates, fortunately or unfortunately, we don't have that in Alberta. It isn't prohibited by the Local Authorities Election Act, but it isn't a common practice as well.

Many of my constituents have mentioned to me in the past that they're worried about certain candidates having these surplus funds with no accountability, with no transparency as to where these monies go. They don't even know how much these people have in these accounts. This bill would actually change that, Mr. Speaker.

It's also critical that any proposed legislation should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities for both candidates and municipal governments, specifically in the handling of funds following an election, and section 147.05 does just that. The subsection clarifies circumstances in which municipalities may return the funds to the candidate. In this way, Bill 203 ensures that contributions are used for their intended purpose, thus ensuring accountability on behalf of the contributor.

Mr. Chair, the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater is to be congratulated on bringing forward this unifying piece of legislation. It's not the first in this country, and I hope it's not the last.

I do want to add a couple of other items as time may allow. I did post on my Twitter earlier what people are saying about this. A gentleman in my constituency named Mike Kuipers talks about democracy belonging to the people, not to the highest bidder. I couldn't agree more. Another individual, Michael Cust, says: campaign finance law is a way to protect incumbents and limit free speech; the only laws surrounding campaign finance should be slim to none. I would submit to Mr. Cust on my Twitter that this isn't a way of protecting incumbents. Rather, it encourages new candidates and encourages more accountability for the funds that the incumbents actually have. A gentleman named Brock also says that reasonable limits to seek and make sure that the average voter remains a factor in elections are worth debate. I agree.

In that respect, I ask all members to support Bill 203. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.



**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to rise and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009, as proposed by the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater. I would like to thank and congratulate the member for this timely and well-thought-out piece of legislation.

While this bill includes a number of notable sections, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to section 147.02(1). This section states that "campaign contributions by any person, corporation, trade union or employee organization to a candidate shall not exceed \$5000 in any campaign period." This campaign contribution limit proposed by section 147.02(1) would offer a number of positive benefits to Alberta's municipal electoral system.

I believe the benefits of this section can be highlighted in three specific areas. First, section 147.02(1) would limit an individual's or group's ability to exercise undue influence through significant financial contributions as their donations would be limited to a regulated maximum of \$5,000. Indeed, given this maximum, Albertans would have greater confidence in the fairness of the electoral process in this province's municipal elections. Moreover, it would help to prevent unwarranted accusations of excessive or undue influence by those who have made significant financial contributions to a municipal campaign. With this in mind, section 147.02(1) would help protect members of the community who would traditionally donate sums greater than the proposed regulated amount. In addition, it would protect candidates and elected officials from being accused of forwarding an initiative because of individuals or groups who had donated significant funds to the campaign.

Second, Mr. Chairman, section 147.02(1) would help to create a more equal electoral playing field for both the electorate and those seeking office. This level playing field would be created in part by reducing the financial influence individuals or groups can have on municipal campaigns and, by extension, the election. Given this, those who may not have the means to donate significant financial sums to a campaign may find the value of their contributions having a greater influence on the direction of the election. This greater influence would be the result of the increased value of their small donations relative to those limited by the regulated campaign contribution maximum.

Further to this, individuals may be more willing to participate in a municipal election if they believe their contributions, financial or otherwise, would have an enhanced impact on the outcome. Ultimately, Mr. Chairman, Albertans would be more likely to volunteer their time or resources if at the end of the day it could have a significant impact on the results of an election. Regardless of their financial means, section 147.02(1) would give Albertans confidence in the fact that their actions and financial contributions would play an important role in who is elected to municipal office.

Third, section 147.02(1) could help to improve voter turnout in Alberta's municipal elections and encourage more Albertans to run for office. Individuals who have traditionally relied on a small number of significant donations to fund their election campaigns would now have to solicit funds from a broader segment of the electorate. Given this, candidates would have to broaden their appeal by forwarding policies that have a greater impact on a municipality's residents. Ultimately, this broader solicitation would result in more members of the local community becoming engaged in municipal elections. In turn, this further engagement would lead to more Albertans casting their votes in municipal elections.

Mr. Chairman, the level playing field that section 147.02(1) would create would also increase the number of candidates in municipal

elections. Individuals might be more inclined to run in a municipal election if they believed they had a more equal opportunity to win. Section 147.02 would reduce the influence the larger financial contributions could have on the outcome of a municipal election. Potential candidates who do not have an established fundraising base would find themselves on a more equal fundraising plan with those who do.

Mr. Chairman, section 147.02(1) offers a profound measure to further Alberta's municipal democratic process. This section would encourage greater participation from the electorate and would protect individuals and groups from allegations of undue influence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to speak on this section and to encourage my colleagues to vote in favour of this bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise today and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009. I would like to commend the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for bringing forward these valuable amendments.

As a newly elected official I was impressed by the thorough and open process with respect to election fundraising and campaign expenditures. My understanding is that we would lose this honourable position in this House if we didn't file our statements.

Mr. Chairman, while I believe the hon. member proposes a number of important amendments, I would like to focus my comments this afternoon on the merits of section 147.09, which is titled Disqualification in Relation to Disclosure Statements. This section relates to elected councillors and reads as follows:

In addition to any other penalty under this Act, if a person who is declared elected as a councillor

- (a) fails to file a disclosure statement required under section 147.04 before the end of the late filing period provided under section 147.07, and
- (b) has not been relieved from this obligation by a court order under section 147.08,

then the person ceases to hold office as a councillor, and the seat is deemed to be vacant.

Mr. Chairman, I believe this language clearly details what is expected of an elected councillor regarding the disclosure of their election finances and contributions and what the penalties are for noncompliance. Section 147.09 details the consequences that someone elected as a councillor would face if he or she failed to file required disclosure statements. It clearly states that as a penalty for failing to file a disclosure statement, an elected councillor will lose his or her position, and the seat will be considered vacant. Mr. Chairman, I believe it is important to emphasize that section 147.09 applies to people who are elected as councillors, not simply all candidates seeking office.

4:30

As I'm sure my colleagues in this Assembly would agree, it is a tremendous honour to be an elected official. However, it is a privilege that is not without conditions. One of those conditions is that elected officials are held accountable to the people for their actions. Therefore, by revealing their campaign period financing, newly elected or re-elected officials are engaging in an act of transparency that justifies the faith that voters have placed in them. As I've previously mentioned, elected officials at the provincial level are subject to legislation that mandates the disclosure of their

election finances and contributions, and for the sake of transparency and accountability I see no reason why municipally elected councillors should not be subject to similar legislation.

Disclosure statements are important documents, Mr. Chairman. They promote voter confidence by assuring them that their elected representatives' campaigns are straightforward, open, and transparent. They also help protect the elected candidates. When an elected candidate's campaign finances and contributions record is accessible to the general public, the possibility of unwarranted allegations is greatly decreased. Disclosure statements are also important documents in the pursuit of transparency and accountability because they publicly document an elected candidate's campaign expenses and contributions. Firstly, disclosure statements must set out the total amount of campaign contributions received during the campaign period not exceeding \$100 per contributor; secondly, if an individual's total contributions during the campaign period exceed \$100, they must detail the total amount contributed together with the contributor's name and address; and thirdly, they must detail campaign expenses.

Holding any office in this beautiful province is a privilege, Mr. Chairman. Without section 147.09 if a municipally elected councillor failed to file the required disclosure statements or was not relieved of this obligation, as per section 147.08 he or she would not be held accountable by the voting public until the next election, nearly three years away. Section 147.09 ensures that election finances and contributions are revealed at the beginning of a municipally elected candidate's term, similar to what is required of the provincially elected officials. Simply put, this bill demands the same accountability of municipally elected officials as this government does of provincially elected officials.

This province understands the importance of ensuring that Albertans seeking political office are transparent in their actions and held accountable for their election finances and contributions. That is why provincial candidates fall under Alberta's Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, which details the requirements for the disclosure of election finances and contributions and prescribes penalties for failure to comply with those requirements. I believe it is reasonable for Albertans to expect accountability and transparency from their provincially elected officials, and I also believe it is reasonable for Albertans to expect the same from their elected representatives at the municipal level.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 203 was designed to build on the good work that many municipalities have already undertaken to ensure accountability in campaign finances. In its spirit Bill 203 seeks to mirror legislation that currently provides provincial election campaign finance contribution and expense disclosure at the municipal level to ensure consistency throughout Alberta, and I believe that this is a worthwhile endeavour.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to declare my support for Bill 203 and urge all members of the Assembly do the same. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise today and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009. I thank the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. Bill 203 seeks to provide campaign finance standards for municipal election campaigns which would be comparable to those already in place at the provincial level.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to a section of the proposed legislation that I find particularly important, section 147.03(1). Subsections (i) and (j) of this legislation address measures to deal with contributions that contravene this act. I would like to discuss section 147.03(1)(i), that states that "a campaign contribution received in contravention of this Act is returned to the contributor as soon as possible after the candidate becomes aware of the contravention." This measure is important to ensure that all contributions received are legal. It will require a process of validation for contributions which previously was not necessary for many local election campaigns.

Furthermore, requiring that all contributions received are validated would build confidence in municipal elections. For example, Bill 203 sets out a contribution limit of \$5,000 for any campaign period. This limit is specifically included in this bill to reduce the ability of individuals or groups from influencing political campaigns or, by extension, the outcome of an election through large financial contributions. This measure provides individuals and groups a greater ability to equally contribute to the electoral process.

Furthermore, this limit prevents municipal campaigns from receiving excessive donations from a select few individuals or entities. Section 147.03(1)(i) is essential to enforcing the contribution limit by requiring excessive donations to be returned to the donor. It sets a clear directive that is to be followed by all municipal campaigns in Alberta.

However, a situation could occur where a contribution that contravenes this act is anonymous. This is why Bill 203 also prohibits any anonymous contributions to candidates. Section 147.03(1)(j) clearly states that "an anonymous campaign contribution or a campaign contribution not returned to the contributor under clause (i) is paid to the secretary for the municipality in which the election is held." Mr. Chairman, it is possible that an anonymous donation originated from outside of Alberta, which is prohibited under this act. By requiring that all anonymous contributions are to be paid to the municipality, any contribution that contravenes this act would not benefit the candidate.

Furthermore, having all anonymous contributions directed to a single entity would ensure that all candidates know exactly how to deal with contributions that are invalid. Moreover, since it's municipalities that fund municipal elections, it is appropriate that these anonymous contributions are returned to the municipality so that they may be used to help pay for the municipality's municipal election expenses. Overall this measure is important to help ensure fairness in municipal election campaigns by providing all candidates a directive to follow regarding anonymous contributions.

Mr. Chairman, the measures in sections 147.03(1)(i) and (j) benefit both the candidate and the contributor. These measures will ensure that all undue influence either from excessive contributions or from contributions by prohibited donors will not interfere in a campaign. Contributors to municipal elections will benefit as these rules would apply to all donors, enhancing the ability for them to equally participate in a municipal campaign by donating to the candidate of their choice. This standard may in the end encourage more people to contribute to a municipal election. Candidates seeking municipal office will also benefit from these measures as all candidates would be required to abide by the same standards.

Mr. Chairman, the measures set out in this bill ensure that all municipal candidates play by the same rules, ensuring that any undue influence, whether from anonymous contributions or that are in excess of \$5,000, are eliminated from municipal campaigns. By establishing these standards, both the candidate and the contributor mutually benefit from both clarity and a level playing field that

would evolve from limited contributions and clarifying eligible donors. Sections 147.03(1)(i) and (j) are very important measures that will strengthen municipal elections by establishing a proper process for dealing with contributions that contravene this act.

I would again like to thank the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for this important piece of legislation. I encourage all hon. members on both sides of the House to vote in favour of Bill 203.

Thanks for the opportunity to discuss this.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to rise today and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009. This act, as you know, was brought forward by my hon. colleague from Athabasca-Redwater, and I'd like to thank him for bringing forward this timely piece of legislation for our consideration.

Hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater, from the bottom of my heart I thank you sincerely.

4:40

Anyway, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to draw the Assembly's attention to a section of the proposed legislation that I find particularly enlightening. Section 147.02(3) was created to clarify who can and who cannot make a financial contribution to a municipal election campaign. Specifically, this section reads:

No prohibited organization, person normally resident outside Alberta or trade union or employee organization other than a trade union or employee organization as defined in this Part shall make any campaign contributions to a candidate.

Section 147.02(3) clearly lists the three groups or bodies not eligible to donate to municipal campaigns.

The first of these are prohibited organizations, which are defined by the act in section 147.01(g) and include municipalities, corporations controlled by a municipality, a nonprofit organization that has received municipal grants, a provincial corporation, a Métis settlement, a school board, a postsecondary organization, or a corporation that does not carry out business in Alberta. Institutions such as publicly supported nonprofit groups and provincial corporations operate using funds derived from the taxpayer. Essentially section 147.02(3) restricts organizations from using public funds to support political campaigns. It just makes sense, Mr. Chairman. It's a no-brainer. Organizations using public funds should not be supporting political campaigns.

In addition, organizations such as school boards and municipally controlled corporations are intricately tied to the administration of a municipality. It might be in the interests of these organizations to support a candidate who addresses their positions or goals. Furthermore, while voting according to self-interest is one of the guiding principles of democracy, there could be a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest in cases where public institutions support political campaigns.

Now, the second group restricted from contributing to municipal political campaigns is trade unions or employee organizations which are not defined by the act. To this end, a trade union is defined by section 147.01(h) which states that:

"trade union" means a trade union as defined by the Labour Relations Code, the Public Service Employee Relations Act or the Canada Labour Code (Canada) and that holds bargaining rights for employees in Alberta.

Furthermore, section 147.01(e) defines an employee organization as "any organization other than a trade union that bargains collec-

tively for any employees in Alberta." The trade unions and employee organizations defined by the act are only those that carry out their operations within Alberta on behalf of Alberta workers.

Mr. Chair, section 147.01(1) clarifies the definition of corporations and those corporations associated with them. To this end it reads:

- (2) Corporations that are associated with one another under section 256 of the Income Tax Act (Canada) shall be considered as a single corporation for the purposes of this Part . . . subsection 256(1) of the Income Tax Act (Canada) shall be read as though the words "at any time in the year" were struck out.
- (3) Nothing done or omitted to be done by a corporation is a contravention of this Part solely because that corporation subsequently becomes associated with any other corporation.

These provisions ensure that corporations associated with one another may only make a single contribution, similar to how locals of a union are considered one donor.

To be clear, Mr. Chairman, section 147.02(3) limits municipal election contributions from trade unions or employee organizations to those unions and organizations that conduct business within Alberta. Prohibiting contributions from organizations outside of the province helps to ensure that municipal elections are only supported by groups directly tied to the municipality. As well, this restriction could build confidence in voters as it would create a framework that ensures that their elections are not unduly influenced by outside groups.

Preventing undue influence from outside groups is also the reasoning behind the third restricted group proposed by section 147.02(3). As defined by this section, people normally residing outside Alberta are not permitted to contribute to a municipal election campaign. Essentially, this means that people residing outside the province would not be able to donate to candidates in Alberta's municipal elections. These restrictions are advantageous in circumstances where an outside group might benefit by having an issue debated at a local level. The issue might not be at the forefront of local debate or important to local residents, but outside groups might use financial support to sway candidates' platforms, thus prioritizing the issue. Therefore, an issue that may not be in the interest of the local population could infringe on an election campaign and take away from more pressing local concerns.

Mr. Chairman, this section recognizes that Alberta's elections should be conducted to meet the interests of Albertans. Realistically, however, outside influence can never be completely removed from an election campaign, nor should it. Outside ideas and proposals may actually add to the debate of local municipal campaigns, and I feel as though any proposal aimed at eliminating this exchange would have negative consequences.

From this, perhaps the most enlightening aspect about section 147.02(3) is not that it tries to control outside influence but that it attempts to restrict undue outside influence. With the restrictions defined by this section in place, non-Alberta residents would not be able to donate to municipal campaigns. They would, however, be able to influence an election through ideas. Mr. Chairman, this would create a scenario where residents could be confident knowing that they were getting the best of two worlds. On the one hand, they would be confident knowing that their candidates were protected from undue outside financial influence while, on the other hand, they would know that they were still able to benefit from outside ideas and opinions.

The benefits of section 147.02(3) are clear, Mr. Chairman. First, this section limits contributions from publicly funded or supported organizations and, secondly, restricts donations from persons or groups residing outside of Alberta.

In closing, I would like to again thank the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for this well-thought-out piece of legislation, and I commend him for the foresight evident in section 147.02(3).

Thank you for allowing me to rise here today and speak on this important section. I look forward to the remainder of the debate.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join the debate and add a few comments within the amount of time we have left on Bill 203, the Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009. I, too, want to add my commendations to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater for his efforts in bringing this forward.

Mr. Chairman, today I'd like to discuss section 147.04 and, specifically, subsections (4) and (5). Section 147.04 is a portion of the bill that addresses campaign disclosure statements. Now, prior to subsection (4), section 147.04 outlines directions for both candidates and the municipality such as when candidates must file their disclosure statements, what those statements should contain, when to file a supplementary statement, if necessary, and what the municipality should do with the disclosure statements.

Mr. Chairman, section 147.04, specifically subsection (3), states that the municipality must make the documents available to the public during regular business hours. It's essential for transparency and public accountability. This bill expects the same of the candidates. Likewise, subsections (4) and (5) promote transparency and public accountability.

4:50

Let me start with subsection (4), which reads:

If a candidate's total amount of campaign contributions or campaign expenses exceeds \$10,000 for a campaign period, the candidate's disclosure statements required under this section must be audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

Mr. Chairman, it's already been established that every candidate must detail his or her campaign contributions and campaign expenses in the disclosure statement, including the identity of all donors contributing more than a hundred dollars within the campaign period, so it should not be an onerous task to have that statement audited. There is no unreasonable burden being placed on the candidate through this requirement. In meeting the requirements for the disclosure statement, a candidate's finances should be ready and organized for an auditor. Likely no additional efforts would be required.

The subsection further outlines that statements must be audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Now, these standards, Mr. Chairman, ensure that the statement is consistent and accurate and that information is adequately disclosed. In complying with those standards, an auditor must have adequate technical training and proficiency, maintain independence, and take due professional care. It is implied, Mr. Chairman, that as in provincial campaign finance disclosures, any costs incurred through the auditing process are covered by the candidate in question.

Subsection (4) also sets out clear guidelines for when these audits are required. They are required when either contributions or expenses exceed \$10,000. This is a reasonable monetary limit, Mr. Chairman, and mirrors similar legislation already in place in Ontario. Presumably, some campaigns are very small, and therefore professional services aren't required to evaluate the accompanying disclosure statements. With larger campaigns, however, the use of a professional auditor guarantees public accountability. This provision protects both candidates and the public. Candidates are

protected from unwarranted allegations of misconduct and possible resulting litigation while public confidence in the candidates is assured through the transparency and the openness of the process. In this way, by demanding disclosure statements, making those statements public, and ensuring that large statements are subject to an independent audit, voter confidence in the honesty, accuracy, and integrity of the election financing is preserved and enhanced.

I'm just cognizant of the time, Mr. Chairman. Just maybe to conclude, subsection (5) ensures that municipalities can determine whether they like candidates to have their disclosure statements audited when the amount of the contribution and expenses is less than \$10,000. There could be any number of reasons why municipalities might decide to make use of section 147.04(5), but that is at their discretion. What concerns us today are the amendments proposed in this bill to allow municipalities to have that choice while still giving voters the comfort and assurance of a transparent election process at the municipal level.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, I am fully in support of Bill 203, and I would encourage all my colleagues in the Assembly to give their support as well.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, are you ready for the question on Bill 203, Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 203 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? It's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report this bill.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 203. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

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

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the close proximity to 5 o'clock, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the

Assembly that we now move to private members' motions to allow the next bill to have an opportunity to have the full time allocation when it comes forward for second reading.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Innovation in Education

508. Mr. Bhullar moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to develop a policy framework to ensure our kindergarten to grade 12 education system is innovative and competency based by exploring incentives to encourage early graduation and by promoting real-world learning opportunities and programs that help engage elementary students facing difficulties.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and open debate on Motion 508. This is really about fostering a culture of innovation in our province. A culture of innovation is one that must start from the very foundation of our society, and the very foundation of our society is our young people, our young people who today are the learners, who tomorrow are the workers and contributors, and who the day after shall be the leaders of our province. It's with that hope of inspiring a culture of innovation where our young people are driven, are inspired to be the problem solvers in our world that I put forward this motion.

Further, Mr. Speaker, at this time there is a dialogue series taking place in our province called Inspiring Education, where the Minister of Education is seeking dialogue and input from Albertans on where our system should be in 20 years, what the educated Albertan looks like 20 years from now. My motion also has an aim to promote this dialogue so that Albertans engage and really look far out to see what the educated Albertan 20 years from now needs to look like.

Mr. Speaker, I specifically want to see discussion on shifting from a model that focuses on completion to a model that focuses on competency. To have a culture of innovation, you must have a system based on competency. Our students, as I said, need to be proactive, and that deals with the first aspect of the motion, creating a system that will allow for and promote early graduation from high school. Now, this is not about getting students through high school sooner so they can merely enter the workforce. This specific part of the motion aims to get young people driven, driven to be responsible and accountable for their own progress in life.

So a grade 9 student, Mr. Speaker, can look and say, "You know, I want to complete high school, and I want to do well so I can go on to law school" or "I want to go on to study nanotechnology." This promotes their being able to complete high school sooner and gives them some incentives to do so.

5:00

The purpose, as I said, behind this is to get young people to be accountable and to be driven because to have an innovative culture, you have to have young people that are accountable for their own lives and driven to achieve and driven to contribute. This can be done, Mr. Speaker, by taking summer courses or passing up on some electives. The end result would have students graduating early, earlier than their peers, and going on to postsecondary earlier or, should they choose, the workforce earlier. The bottom line is that they have an opportunity to do so already in our system, and providing some incentives to do so, I think, would be very positive.

Mr. Speaker, the next part of my motion deals with creating real-

world learning opportunities. This, the real-world learning opportunities, focuses not just on work opportunities but also postsecondary opportunities. What I'm proposing here is that a student in high school should have the ability to work towards, perhaps, some sort of postsecondary certification while in high school, have some of their electives count towards postsecondary education, allow students to be engaged in the workforce. This is a way of connecting our high school system with the real world and, in turn, having a group of students that leave our high school system already connected and integrated with the world as opposed to walking out of high school and then being hit flat on with the so-called real world.

Mr. Speaker, this particular part of the motion also has potential to really engage high school students that may not be engaged with traditional teaching methods. If there's a student who, you know, doesn't quite connect with just sitting in class and learning and maybe wants some sort of opportunities where they feel that they're learning something real and practical, this would provide them with that opportunity. It's a matter and a way of engaging students that may not be engaged today.

We have such programs today, Mr. Speaker, like the RAP program, that allow students to earn their high school diploma while obtaining on-the-job training. We can further these programs. We can apply the same concept to many other areas outside of just the apprenticeships and the trades. We should apply this concept to the finance world, to the justice world. Give students an opportunity to connect with the real world while they're in high school. This motion recognizes the importance of these projects and merely seeks to expand on them.

One very exciting program, Mr. Speaker, that I've recently learned of is a program at SAIT, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, the career pathways pharmacy technician retail program. Now this is very, very exciting; 30 students will receive their high school diploma along with a SAIT certificate. So while these students work on their high school diploma, they're also getting recognition and certification as a retail pharmacy technician. This empowers them to work in this particular field right after high school. There is massive demand, I'm told, on the part of students to enrol in this program.

Students get this. Students want this. The student of today wants this. They want to be able to engage in the real world sooner and quicker. The student of today is more engaged in the issues of the day, Mr. Speaker. Some of the most challenging dialogues I have in my constituency are with high school students because they long for more involvement in the real world.

I'm told that this specific program at SAIT has more schools joining it. Three more schools are joining up with this program. There are, as I said, far more applicants than positions available. This particular program, Mr. Speaker, is the first of its kind, and I think that this particular model can be applied to many other careers that we perhaps have shortages in or wherever feasible. This, I propose, will also help with our high school completion rates. I think that providing these real-world opportunities will keep more students engaged in their high school system, that it will make them want to complete it.

Finally, Mr. Speaker – I'm told I've got a minute left – the third component encourages the government to further support elementary students facing challenges. Now, challenges are plentiful. As study after study will show, it's in those early years that a child's love for education is either built or not. I am a strong proponent of finding ways and mechanisms to help young students in elementary school really engage with education. If they come from a household that

perhaps is not as engaged in education or doesn't value it as much, or maybe they come from a household where they are not encouraged to be educated or they get no support per se with respect to education, well, maybe in our school system there are some ways for us to engage those young people at an early age to build in them a love for learning, an understanding that education is empowerment, so they can achieve and do great things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. While I appreciate the mover's intent with Motion 508 and while I support components of it, I'm not convinced that this is the vehicle to achieve the end result desired. Looking at Alberta high school completion rates, in 2002-2003 the number of students who finished within a three-year period, which is the expectation – grades 10, 11, 12 done once; this resource is from the Ministry of Education – was 67.8 per cent. In the most recent statistics that has only moved up to 71 per cent. So we have approximately 30 per cent of our students still failing to complete senior high school within a three-year period.

It improves somewhat when we get to those who hang around for a fourth year. In 2002-2003 the number of individuals who finally finished high school after sticking around for the extra year was 72 per cent, and currently it's 76 per cent taking four years. Now, if a student was to spend a fifth year, or an extra two years, in high school, things improve somewhat. In 2002-2003 the rate of completion after five years of high school was 75 per cent, and in 2006-2007, 79.5 per cent.

I understand why the hon. member is wanting to improve the system. But there are other factors that have to be taken into account. I agree with the hon. member that making education more relevant is one of those ways, but relevancy doesn't necessarily happen or go hand in hand with speed of completion.

5:10

Now, the hon. member mentioned some very good programs; for example, CTS programs that give you sort of a hands-on experience early on. Those CTS credits earned in junior high can be applied to senior high, so after a fashion there is a speeding circumstance built up within the program. I agree with the idea that if you have sufficient space on your timetable, it would be nice to see CTS high school level courses apply to postsecondary possibilities. That part I support.

I also support the idea of the RAP program, where students get first-hand experience working with builders or architects or plumbers or electricians. They get that hands-on, supervised equivalent of an early apprenticeship program. That program already exists within the high schools. I know that a number of high schools have businesses that support them and encourage their students to build the home and even go so far in terms of fundraising as to provide the school with a portion of the sale of the home to indicate how well the students involved in the project did in terms of completing and working side by side with experienced carpenters or experienced electricians. So we already have some wonderful circumstances within the program.

I've always had concerns about parts of the British system, the 11 plus program, where, basically, at a very tender age students were streamed as to their end product, where they would eventually graduate. I believe that high school should be more than just a training ground for future potentials. I also agree, for example, that engineers should have at least a 201 English equivalent or a

humanities equivalent. What I don't want to see happening is the equivalent of an Aldous Huxley brave new world, where you put in a certain incubated series of sperm and egg and, depending on how fast you twirl your test tube, you create a khaki worker or a red extreme worker or a yellow professor or a blue Smurf.

What I'm getting at is that I believe there has to be a well-rounded education. I agree that there's a need to improve our current system. In terms of dealing with our current situation, challenging an exam already exists, for example, in language proficiency. If a student has had an opportunity to, you know, live in Quebec for some time or they've travelled to Europe, they can challenge the exam and get the credit for it already. That frees them up for other pursuits. We've talked about the work experience programs and so on.

In order for Motion 508 to be successful at all three levels, the government would have to support – and I'm saying financially support – early intervention programs. When a child is identified as early as age three with having a learning disability, then an opportunity for the parent to seek extra support in the form of learning and special programs would be extremely important. But this government for the last six years has refused – for example, in terms of creating a strong foundation – to fund optional full-day kindergarten for those parents who would like to give their child that not necessarily a head start but a keep-up circumstance. The government has not even considered the recommendation of half-day junior kindergarten.

If we're talking about creating a greater strength and understanding and literacy and numeracy early on in the system, then there's going to have to be an expenditure. The government is going to have to at some point live up to its K to 3 teacher-pupil ratios of 1 to 17, which they are so far from achieving that, unfortunately, this idea that's being put forward under Motion 508, K to 12 education, is still in our current circumstance a bit of a pipe dream.

In terms of making education relevant, education is more than academics. It's more than trades. It also involves options and extracurricular such as leadership programs. It might involve students in business experiments. It might involve them in giving them an opportunity to participate in sports beyond the grade 10 level at high school. I'm not saying to make it compulsory, but I'm saying: offer students the widest variety of a menu to choose from as opposed to trying to rush them through the current system. We need to support children to a much greater extent early on than we currently do.

I know from junior high teaching experience that students are looking for more than just, as I say, academics. They are looking for opportunities. One of the programs that I thoroughly enjoyed was along the lines of a CTS program, but what it did was that it encouraged leadership, and students had an opportunity to select where they wanted to contribute. For some students it was a matter of going across the parking lot from F.E. Osborne junior high over to Marion Carson elementary, where they would mentor and work with younger children. Some other students chose to be part of the school's recycling program. I didn't judge as to where they should go. The only limitations were the number of spaces available.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to spend a few moments and add to the debate on Motion 508, which urges the government to develop a policy framework to ensure that our K to 12 education system is innovative and competency based by exploring incentives to encourage early graduation, promoting real-world learning opportunities and programs that help engage elementary students facing difficulties.

First, I would like to commend the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose for bringing this ambitious motion forward. I support this motion because I believe it is good for all students to have more options in their education. This motion proposes several options for high school students, from early graduation to workforce training and postsecondary learning opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I see a high school diploma as a starting point for individuals, not a finishing point. For an increasing number of students this means going to postsecondary institutions, but for a significant portion of Alberta's high school students this means learning a trade. Because of this, I would like to focus on the part of Motion 508 that deals with promoting real-world learning opportunities. This portion addresses one of this government's goals, which is to enhance value-added activities, increase innovation, and build a skilled workforce to improve the long-term sustainability of Alberta's economy.

The registered apprenticeship program does just that. It allows students the opportunity to begin apprenticing while still in high school, which can go a long way to building a skilled workforce. When I went to school, the focus was always on mathematics, social studies, language arts, and science. Although these core subjects are very important, Mr. Speaker, everybody has different interests and different skill sets.

5:20

Before being elected last March, I served as a RAP co-ordinator for Edmonton public schools at J. Percy Page high school. There I had the pleasure of seeing first-hand the impacts that real-world learning can have on young people's lives. I have seen students who had never cared much for school enrolled in mechanics or carpentry courses, for example, and have seen their whole lives and attitudes turn around. Mr. Speaker, these students found themselves something that they were passionate about. School was no longer a daily chore for these students but a chance to create a vision for their future, a future that includes education.

The other major benefit for the students who participate in the registered apprenticeship program is the ability for these students to earn while they learn. Many students can be lured away from high school with the prospects of earning some money, but with programs such as RAP students can work and earn money while gaining credits towards high school graduation. This can be a major motivator in keeping Alberta's youth in school.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 508 encourages the continuation and growth of programs that offer real-world learning opportunities, such as RAP. Students, schools, and teachers can continue to benefit greatly from this program and other skills like it. In addition, if these programs continue to grow, it will help raise high school completion rates, foster a more skilled workforce, introduce students to something they feel passionately about, and motivate them towards lifelong learning.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly support this motion and look forward to listening to the rest of the debate. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Motion 508, which urges the government to encourage real-world learning options for Alberta students. Specifically, this motion proposes to encourage early graduation programs, to develop and support real-world training, and to extend additional supports to

elementary students facing difficulties. While all three of these proposals are valuable and worthy of debate in their own right, today I'd like to focus my comments on early graduation programs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, current graduation requirements dictate that in order for a student to earn a high school diploma, they need to meet certain criteria, obviously. For example, they must have 100 course credits, and they must complete several core course requirements such as social studies, math, English, and science. There are no stipulations, however, on how quickly a student can achieve these requirements. Therefore, it is possible for a student to graduate in two or two and a half years if they take summer courses and schedule their time effectively.

I feel that it is important to clarify that Motion 508 will not change graduation requirements. Motion 508 proposes to urge the government to develop programs to encourage students to consider the benefits of early graduation. Mr. Speaker, these benefits are numerous. For example, a student who graduates in two years rather than three will be able to enter a postsecondary institution or the workforce at an earlier date than their classmates. Essentially, as a reward for their hard work and planning while in high school, these industrious students will have one extra year to get ahead both financially and academically. Another potential benefit that could be associated with an early graduation program is that it empowers students to take a more proactive role in their learning.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I went to a very unique high school way back when, way back in 1975 – I think that was the year – before some of my colleagues here were even born. I went to Bishop Carroll high school in Calgary. It was a very unique program, a self-study program. There were no classes. There were no lectures at the school. We all worked independently. We would collect a unit or two, and we would work on these units, and when we completed the required work and the required reading from these units, then we would write the test.

**Ms Redford:** Then you'd get a green slip.

**Mr. Webber:** And we'd get a green slip, yes. My colleague obviously experienced Bishop Carroll high school as well. Is that correct?

**Ms Redford:** Yes.

**Mr. Webber:** I did not know that. Well, a fellow alumni.

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, I guess what I have to say with regard to Bishop Carroll was that it empowered me to take a proactive role in my learning. I wanted to finish high school early. I wanted to get out into the workforce and make some money. I had a lot of extracurricular activities that were quite expensive. I had a girlfriend at the time. She was very high maintenance, so I had to make some additional dollars there. Plus, you know, I played sports, and I had a car I had to pay for, so I had to get out of high school early. This is what drove me to want to finish high school early.

Now, early graduation requires long-term planning, goal setting, and dedication, and by encouraging students to graduate early, these important life skills could be further developed. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I did not have the dedication or the drive to finish early, but I did finish. I want to make it clear that I did finish. It took me three and a half years to finish high school. You know, I have to admit, though, that I had a lot of extracurricular activities. I did get my matriculation also, so I was quite proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, I feel as though the potential benefits of early graduation programs warrant further investigation and study, so I

will be standing in support of Motion 508. I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose for bringing this motion forward, and I encourage all members to join with me.

With that, I look forward to the remainder of the debate. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand up today to speak to Motion 508, and I want to commend the Member for Calgary-Montrose for bringing this forward. I believe it's at an opportune time with the dialogue that the Minister of Education is having with Albertans regarding the future of our education system. The passion that the hon. member has about this particular issue was very obvious, and that passion goes back years. I know that even before being in this Assembly, the hon. member and myself had many discussions about areas where we could improve our education system, both for the individual as well as for our society at large.

I wanted to start off my portion of speaking today with a quote from an excerpt – I was just doing some research on this topic – from the dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. It comes from Contribution to Memos to the Prime Minister: What Canada Could Be in the 21st Century, 2001. He says:

Government needs to put a premium on education at all levels, from pre-school to post-graduate. But more of the same and increased spending alone won't cut it. We need a profound values shift and a radical reinvention if we are to lead the world in the creation of the most valued commodity in the coming century: knowledge assets . . .

Creating the best education system in the world won't be easy. Globalization, the rise of technology, and a greater emphasis on the autonomy of the individual mean we need to think about education in new ways. In the new millennium, the world will be an increasingly interconnected place. We need to look at education holistically – as a total system with continuity through all levels. Right now, we are doing the opposite . . .

The fundamental educational experience of our students now is that they learn in silos, right from kindergarten, a stale curriculum that does not connect to the society in which students actually live and function.

I think that the issue that this gentleman has laid out – his name is Roger L. Martin. Again, he's the dean at the Rotman School of Management. I believe that this motion specifically addresses this issue.

I also want to indicate that one of my favourite quotes that I've heard is from a Canadian journalist, publisher, and producer, Gwynne Dyer, and he says:

Our intelligence tends to produce technological and social change at a rate faster than our institutions and emotions can cope with . . . Innovation is cumulative and the rate of change accelerates. We therefore find ourselves continually trying to accommodate new realities within inappropriate existing institutions, and trying to think about those new realities in traditional but sometimes dangerously irrelevant terms.

5:30

Now, I heard the Member for Calgary-Varsity get up and speak to this motion, and clearly he was not in favour. For someone who claims to belong to a progressive party, I believe that he's speaking in very dangerous and irrelevant terms when it comes to education in our society today. Quite frankly, he represents a position that does not serve our economy, our society, in the empowerment of individual people. I believe this motion gets to that.

In doing some further research to this issue, I came across another website. I can't remember what exactly it was called. It referred to an individual that started doing some consulting work in this particular area. He was somebody whose high school years were a disaster, walked away from high school at the age of 18. What he learned was "the ability to educate myself made it possible to break through society imposed barriers and be the person I dreamed of being." What this motion does, I believe, is allow individuals to take control of their own destiny, of their own talents, of their own dreams and plan for that and be rewarded for that. I commend the hon. member for bringing this up.

I talked about sometimes dangerous or irrelevant institutions. We talk about lifelong learning. Everybody from academics to teachers to politicians to bureaucrats to industry talk about lifelong learning, yet we continue to be siloed in these K to 12 and postsecondary institutions. Mr. Speaker, if lifelong learning is truly the mantra and truly the concept that we need to go towards, I would suggest that what we need to do is start to break down those silo barriers. In fact, those barriers were created, I believe, to serve a post Industrial Revolution society, not the society and economy that we're in today. I believe that this motion certainly attempts to break down those barriers by allowing high school students to set their own direction and graduate based on the competencies that they learn and to move on, whether it's to further education or work, based on those competencies, not based on some uniform formula that some bureaucrat or some educator dreams up.

The other point that I think this really stresses is the importance of other opportunities for learning, particularly work-related opportunities. I've got these examples that I'd like to bring forward. We talk about, you know, speed of graduation or whatever. First of all, my girlfriend graduated from the University of Lethbridge with a bachelor of commerce degree. It's normally a four-year degree, Mr. Speaker. She graduated in three and a half years. Not only did she graduate in three and a half years, she did three co-op work terms: one as an internship down in Chicago, one where she actually worked with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology right here in Edmonton, and one with the Lethbridge Hurricanes hockey team. Just talking with her about our general education system, she explained to me that those were the real learning opportunities. In fact, the coursework that she took at the University of Lethbridge probably had less applicability to her current roles and jobs than the work experience that she had.

Mr. Speaker, I faced very similar experiences. I graduated from the University of Calgary with a degree in political science. One of my former professors is here. As good as the classes were that he taught, I really didn't start to learn about the political process and being involved in the community until I got a job as a summer student in the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs' constituency office, which happened to be in the community that I grew up in. It's these opportunities that we need to provide, a more formal mechanism to allow high school and university students to become involved. If there's one thing that this motion could really do, it's promote those types of opportunities.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to adopt this motion and encourage the ministers of Education and Advanced Education to use this motion and the debate on this motion as part of the policy framework that will result from the Inspiring Education dialogue with Albertans.

Thank you very much.

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



**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak to Motion 508, encourage real-world learning opportunities, sponsored by my colleague the Member for Calgary-Montrose. Motion 508 urges the government to explore incentives which allow for early graduation, promote real-world learning opportunities, and focus on disengaged elementary students.

Elementary education is a critical part of a child's growth and development because they learn fundamental academic and social skills which will serve as a foundation for future learning. Motion 508 proposes that we need to support more flexible and responsive programs in order to achieve equal outcomes for elementary students who face multiple challenges. To this end, it is important that we identify children who are facing difficulties at an early age. This may require greater co-operation and co-ordination between education, social services, and health organizations. Population or demographic analysis should be used along with school performance and student test results to determine the level of teacher and resource allocation as well as overall program design, including critical hours and extracurricular programming.

Some of the remedial and enrichment programs that have been proposed from various researchers include programs geared towards specific types of intelligence, preschool programs for the financially disadvantaged, weekend schools for ESL students or other students in need of remedial support, and incorporation of mother tongues in educational instruction, just to name a few.

Our school systems may also need to assess whether existing innovative and special programs such as arts-focused programs, sports schools, and other similar programs are accessible to all students, including those whose parents do not have the capacity and resources to provide additional support to their children. We know that even having just one significant person in a child's life can make a whole world of difference in the development of the child, so mentoring programs and friendship support are equally important to the learning outcomes of children who face additional challenges in life.

Mr. Speaker, some of the school systems have explored the development of an equity policy, but the process seldom, if ever, comes to fruition. Public discourse on an examination of the challenges to establish clear direction and commitment to address equal learning outcomes for disadvantaged students through policy would yield additional insights on taking a more systemic approach to address the comprehensive learning needs of children.

Alberta has an exceptional education system, and our challenge is to ensure that this excellent system will work for all students that possess the potential to learn and become productive citizens despite having additional challenges. As our society continues to become more knowledge-based, it is critical that we continue to improve programs for students with unique needs and additional challenges and grant each student the specific assistance that they may need.

Motion 508 will enhance the culture of knowledge and the culture of innovation in Alberta and continue to promote lifelong learning. It is for these reasons that I applaud the Member for Calgary-Montrose for Motion 508, and I encourage all members of this House to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion would have high school programs geared towards encouraging students to finish high school as quickly as possible to join the workforce. The perception is that, you know, we are just creating this production line here. We

put the students through the schools very, very quickly, without the understanding of their education, and just send them into the workforce.

Talking about early graduation, this motion would see innovation in school systems that would encourage students to graduate early, but what is the motivation for getting the high school students to graduate early? The real issue is that not enough Alberta students are graduating at all. British Columbia, for instance, and Saskatchewan report higher high school completion rates than Alberta. In British Columbia the dropout rate has declined 44 per cent, from 13.3 per cent to 7 and a half per cent. Saskatchewan's declined 34 per cent, from 16.3 per cent to 10.7 per cent, whereas in Alberta the decline is 24 per cent, from 15.8 per cent to 12 per cent. So still the dropout rate is higher. I think we should be looking at that to encourage students not to drop out of school early. In B.C. the overall high school completion rate for aboriginal students was 80.4 per cent in 2006-07. In Alberta the completion rate is 48.4 per cent. Instead of putting them faster through school, I think we should be looking into the reasons why this current rate of completion is so low.

5:40

For instance, in Calgary northeast for English as a second language, you know, I don't think we can speed up the process for those students to go through high school faster. If English is not their first language, then I think we should be putting more resources into those schools for teaching English.

Then we were talking about early elementary school programs. There's currently an early childhood development mapping project, which is province-wide, which provides a program for children as young as two and a half years old. Children who have disabilities and delays can be eligible for up to three years of funding. The problems with ECS include that many students are not identified as delayed, so they do not access ECS programming. We need better access to early diagnostic testing. Some students are not protected by all of the provisions of the School Act.

Another great way to help engage students with difficulties is to feed them. School lunch programs have been shown to help students not only show up at school but also to perform better on their achievement tests. One out of every 10 live in poverty in Alberta, so we should be looking after those children so that they can better access the education system.

Those are the concerns I have. I think we should be addressing those concerns before we speed them through the high school system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to give some further commentary on Motion 508, dealing with real-world learning, as presented by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose. In particular, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about education, coming from a long line of teachers in my family.

As proposed, Motion 508 would further highlight the government's support for developing innovative educational opportunities in several areas. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose mentioned, this motion has three major components. First, it proposes the government explore incentives to encourage early graduation; second, the motion encourages the promotion of real-world learning opportunities; and finally, it promotes programs that help engage elementary students who are facing difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, all of these ideas are important enough to foster a culture of innovation, and although I support all facets of this

motion, I want to discuss and focus on the exploration of incentives to encourage early graduation. The reason I find this particularly interesting is that it provides students with more options reflecting the modern reality of education, and more options, of course, mean greater ability to control your own future.

I know that accelerated education is already available for Alberta students so long as the requisite number of credits and the core courses are completed, but this motion goes further than simply allowing early graduation and suggests that these incentives should be used in order to further encourage early graduation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, being a Conservative, I'm a firm believer in individualism. People work and learn at different rates, and the option should be there for students who are ambitious and bright to graduate early and to move on to the next part of their lives, again the modern reality of education. This motion introduces a way that early graduation could become more widespread and sought after by students. Scholarship-style incentives would also reward students who work hard and have the talent necessary for early graduation. I know that at least a few advanced students coasted through high school because there was little extra incentive for them to apply themselves to the fullest. We don't want to inadvertently encourage underachievement in that respect either. If an incentive is created to encourage these students to work towards their full potential, there's a good chance that a culture of innovation would be further developed in our province and in our high schools.

Who knows what our brightest young minds might be able to accomplish in such an environment, Mr. Speaker? I would submit to this House that the possibilities are indeed limitless. In addition to the benefits for the students who qualify for early graduation, there are also benefits for the schools and for other students. The students who would most likely apply for early graduation are students that need less attention and instruction. However, the majority of students would still be going through high school in the conventional manner. Early graduation of the advanced students would free up class space, would allow teachers to spend more time with the individuals that need more instruction. This concentration of resources could lead to a better educational experience for all of Alberta's students.

One opportunity that I did also want to share is, again, on the modern reality of education. Usually in the past you'd finish high school at 17 or 18. You'd go on to either university, technical school, or to whatever vocation you wanted to pursue. I remember that when I started law school, I was 21 years old, and I remember that there were many people who had actually in fact finished masters degrees, had different careers. One even had a PhD. Many even had families as well. The modern reality of education is that there are many different people at many different stages of their life that will seek higher education, but on the other end as well there are

also many different types of students who would benefit from this motion in an accelerated program. For this reason I do support Motion 508.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity made some comment earlier about parents knowing best. I don't remember exactly what it was, but I definitely do think, too, that I was very happy to hear that he does believe that parents do have an important value in their children's education.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I do support Motion 508, and I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate if there is any at this hour. Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose to close debate.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all members for their participation in this debate. Really quickly, members opposite brought up a series of concerns that they have with the education system. However, they show a reluctance to look at something new and something innovative. My friends, the world has complex problems, and to solve them, we must think outside the box and try something new, whether that be in education or whatever else. This motion merely says: let's think outside the box.

It's not meant for every student to be plugged along in high school quicker; it's meant for the innovators. Mr. Speaker, if I may, just one quick example of an innovator, the sort of student I'm speaking of here. Harsimar is, I believe, 14 years old. At the age of 14 he has established a business whereby he has contractors overseas that develop very sophisticated websites. So a 14-year-old kid here has the potential to start an international business. Now, that is the sort of student that should have incentives on the part of government to say: "Go out there and be innovative. Go out there and achieve everything you can, and we as a system will support you. We will not hinder you with rules that don't add to your progression." That's an example of the sort of individual here that will lead our province and our nation to great things.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we close debate and vote on the motion.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour I move that we do now adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:50 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]







## Table of Contents

Introduction of Visitors .....	1039
Introduction of Guests .....	1039
Members' Statements	
Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service .....	1040
Anniversary of Canada-Israel Diplomatic Relations .....	1040
Calgary Airport Runway .....	1040
Kingsway Business Association .....	1040
National Mining Week .....	1041
Foreign Workers .....	1041
Oral Question Period	
Parental Choice in Education .....	1041
Alberta Health Services Capital Reserve .....	1042
Marketing of Agricultural Products .....	1042
New Home Warranty .....	1043
Anthony Henday Drive Interchanges .....	1043
Funding for Teachers' Collective Agreements .....	1044
Federal Infrastructure Funding .....	1044
Automobile Insurance .....	1045
WorldSkills Calgary 2009 .....	1045
Protection of Freedom of Expression .....	1046
Groundwater Monitoring .....	1046
Forest Industry Sustainability .....	1047
Air Quality .....	1047
Workforce Employment Services .....	1048
Ministerial and Senior Official Vehicle Fleet .....	1048
Energy Efficiency Rebates .....	1049
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 47 Appropriation Act, 2009 .....	1049
Bill 48 Crown's Right of Recovery Act .....	1049
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	1049
Tablings to the Clerk .....	1050
Motions for Returns	
Lottery Fund Grant Announcements .....	1050
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 203 Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009 .....	1053
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Innovation in Education .....	1065

**STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

**Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Mitzel  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund  
 Bhullar  
 Blakeman  
 Campbell  
 Horne  
 Lukaszuk  
 MacDonald  
 Marz  
 Notley  
 Webber

**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mrs. Forsyth  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Elniski  
 Blakeman  
 Campbell  
 DeLong  
 Denis  
 Johnston  
 Kang  
 MacDonald

**Standing Committee on Community Services**

Chair: Mr. Doerksen  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Hehr  
 Benito  
 Bhardwaj  
 Chase  
 Johnson  
 Johnston  
 Lukaszuk  
 Notley  
 Rodney  
 Sarich

**Standing Committee on the Economy**

Chair: Mr. Campbell  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Taylor  
 Allred  
 Amery  
 Bhullar  
 Marz  
 McFarland  
 Taft  
 Weadick  
 Xiao  
 Vacant

**Standing Committee on Health**

Chair: Mr. Horne  
 Deputy Chair: Ms Pastoor  
 Dallas  
 Denis  
 Fawcett  
 Notley  
 Olson  
 Quest  
 Sherman  
 Taft  
 Vandermeer

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Mitzel  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund  
 Bhullar  
 Blakeman  
 Campbell  
 Horne  
 Lukaszuk  
 MacDonald  
 Marz  
 Notley  
 Webber

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Kowalski  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Oberle  
 Elniski  
 Fawcett  
 Hehr  
 Leskiw  
 Mason  
 Rogers  
 Taylor  
 VanderBurg  
 Weadick

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Dr. Brown  
 Deputy Chair: Ms Woo-Paw  
 Allred          Jacobs  
 Amery          MacDonald  
 Anderson      McQueen  
 Benito          Olson  
 Bhardwaj      Quest  
 Boutilier      Rodney  
 Calahasen     Sandhu  
 Dallas          Sarich  
 Doerksen      Taft  
 Forsyth

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Prins  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Hancock  
 Amery          Mitzel  
 Berger          Notley  
 Calahasen      Oberle  
 DeLong          Pastoor  
 Doerksen       Rogers  
 Forsyth          Sherman  
 Johnson          Stevens  
 Leskiw          Taylor  
 Liepert          Zwozdesky  
 McFarland

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. MacDonald  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Quest  
 Benito          Johnson  
 Bhardwaj       Kang  
 Chase           Mason  
 Dallas          Olson  
 Denis           Sandhu  
 Drysdale       Vandermeer  
 Fawcett        Woo-Paw  
 Jacobs

**Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services**

Chair: Mr. VanderBurg  
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Kang  
 Anderson  
 Brown  
 Calahasen  
 Cao  
 Jacobs  
 MacDonald  
 Sandhu  
 Woo-Paw  
 Vacant

**Standing Committee on Resources and Environment**

Chair: Mr. Prins  
 Deputy Chair: Ms Blakeman  
 Berger  
 Boutilier  
 Drysdale  
 Griffiths  
 Hehr  
 Mason  
 McQueen  
 Oberle  
 Webber

If your address is incorrect, please clip on the dotted line, make any changes, and return to the address listed below. To facilitate the update, please attach the last mailing label along with your account number.

Subscriptions  
Legislative Assembly Office  
1001 Legislature Annex  
9718 - 107 Street  
EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4

---

Last mailing label:

Account # \_\_\_\_\_

New information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Subscription information:

Annual subscriptions to the paper copy of *Alberta Hansard* (including annual index) are \$127.50 including GST if mailed once a week or \$94.92 including GST if picked up at the subscription address below or if mailed through the provincial government interdepartmental mail system. Bound volumes are \$121.70 including GST if mailed. Cheques should be made payable to the Minister of Finance.

Price per issue is \$0.75 including GST.

On-line access to *Alberta Hansard* is available through the Internet at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca)

Address subscription inquiries to Subscriptions, Legislative Assembly Office, 1001 Legislature Annex, 9718 - 107 St., EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4, telephone 780.427.1302.

Address other inquiries to Managing Editor, *Alberta Hansard*, 1001 Legislature Annex, 9718 - 107 St., EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4, telephone 780.427.1875.