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The 28th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday, April 10, 2014

Issue 16

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Second Session

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC), Speaker
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Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
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Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
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Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),
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Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 58 Wildrose: 17 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 3

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Eggen	Quadri
Hehr	Rogers
Kubinec	Rowe
Lemke	Sarich
Luan	Stier
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Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Casey

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Khan
Barnes	Sandhu
Dorward	Sherman
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Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Rogers

Deputy Chair: Mr. Quadri

Blakeman	Leskiw
Eggen	McDonald
Goudreau	Saskiw
Lemke	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Luan	Wilson
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Olesen	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

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Amery	Luan
Barnes	Pastoor
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Bikman	Hale
Bilous	Johnson, L.
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Brown	Xiao
Calahasen	Young
Casey	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 10, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. As we reflect on our work in this Chamber for this week, let us be thankful for the opportunity given to us by our constituents to serve them. Pray that we always be reminded of the trust they have placed in us to represent them, regardless of the issues that arise in this Chamber or in our constituencies. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us begin with school groups, starting with Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Airdrie.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members of this Assembly 13 bright, young students from Glenwood school. The town of Glenwood is a small but beautiful community located in the foothills near Waterton park in my constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner. These fine and eager students are also accompanied by their principal, Kelly Thomas; his lovely wife, Kathy; and vice-principal, D.J. Scott. I would ask that our guests from Glenwood please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 90 visitors that we have today from Ralph McCall school in Airdrie. They're seated in the gallery today. I'd like to introduce their teachers first – Ms Pamela Burke, Mr. Robert Saipe, Miss Katie Kraemer, Mr. Brian Jackson, and Ms Christine Tatomir – as well as their parent helpers, Ms Andrea Quick, Mrs. Linda Sefcik, Mrs. Penny Diechert, Mr. Cory Fries, Mr. Patrick Parker, and Mr. Aaron Vance Bird. If everyone could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there other school groups?

Seeing none, let's move on to other introductions, starting with Edmonton-South West, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Jeneroux: Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two strong advocates for youth engagement in Alberta. Both of my guests attended our second youth think tank held at Government House on March 15 and gave their input on how government, in particular the Youth Secretariat, can engage youth. My first guest is an alumni member of the Youth Advisory Panel, Amber Moos. She is an advocate for mentorship programs, after attending the National Mentoring Symposium in Banff, and is a student at Vanguard College. With her is my very good friend David Rust, the director of community partnerships for the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, with whom I've had the pleasure of having many great discussions on

the future of youth in our province. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have four people that are joining us in the gallery. I'm not sure which side quite yet, but these are all people who work at one of the seniors' residences in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre and specifically that is The Churchill, now called the Revera Churchill. These are all AUPE members, and if they are in the gallery, would they please rise. It's Rhonda Wolfe, Kevin Tirimba, Nothando Mkwanarzi, and Eyerusalem Girmay. Oh, there they are. And with them somewhere is my friend Trevor Zimmerman, I hope. They have risen. I would ask that we please acknowledge the very hard work of people that are working in seniors' care in Alberta today. These are members of AUPE, and they are doing a stellar job for us, working with our seniors and vulnerable adults. They are up for a contract dispute, so I hope that's going to go well for them. Please join me in welcoming them today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my guest, Sonam Sharma. Sonam is part of the making change project through the Indo-Canadian Women's Association, which seeks to orient Canadian girls of Middle Eastern and South Asian heritage toward leadership roles in Canada's civic, political, and community life. They've recently concluded a needs assessment that highlights the barriers that restrict girls' leadership potential, and one such need is to find a female mentor and a role model in their field of interest. Sonam has expressed an interest in provincial politics and has asked to shadow me for a few days to see what it's like. Hopefully, she'll choose politics anyway. I would now ask Sonam to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly two wonderful people that are close friends from my constituency of Livingstone-Macleod who live in the historic town of Turner Valley, Bob and Joan Weder. Bob is an engineer who is receiving his 40-year pin from the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta, known as ASET, here in Edmonton this weekend. He was also my chief northern district campaign director in the 2012 election, and his efforts along with his wife Joan's were exemplary. Joan is a long-time friend who spent many years working in downtown Calgary and also is a key volunteer in the Okotoks Agricultural Society. Bob and Joan are here in Edmonton today to tour the Legislature and also observe question period. At this time I would invite Bob and Joan to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the leader of the Liberal opposition.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the president and staff of the Edmonton branch of the Memory Keepers Association of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis of Rwanda. I would now ask that the individuals please stand as I call their names: Rubarake Seth Muhima, president of the Memory Keepers Association; Emmanuel Kaviziya, vice-president; Marie-Gracia Mujiraneza, adviser; Marie-Claudette Kantengwa, adviser; and Uwamwezi Speciose, adviser. I would now ask that they receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, leader of the Liberal opposition, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four elected student leaders: Petros Kusmu, Navneet Khinda, Sean Glydon, and Chris Hollingsworth. These individuals are leaders in the student community and represent the best and brightest that Alberta has to offer. In fact, we had a good chit-chat, and I suggested that they serve with us in the near future as Liberal MLAs. They have been meeting with many members of this Assembly in order to advocate on issues important to Alberta postsecondary students and all of society: more funding for mental health programs; a return of the STEP program, in fact a super-STEP program; regulation on mandatory noninstructional fees; plus a massive investment in postsecondary education, just to name a few. I would ask these four leaders to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hehr: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you, in fact, to all members of this august Assembly Beverly Eastham, Missy Chareka, Adam Woods, Shuna Talbot, and William Lau. These students are representatives of CAUS, the Council of Alberta University Students. CAUS is an advocacy group representing over 100,000 Alberta students. Their leadership is crucial for Alberta's postsecondary students to have their voices heard. I would ask Beverly, Missy, Adam, Shuna, and William to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

1:40

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Let us begin with Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Rwandan Genocide

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty years ago a dark moment in humanity's history occurred, an event that must never be forgotten: the Rwandan genocide. In 1994 innocent Rwandans with dreams and some with families, people just like you and me, were slaughtered, murdered solely for political motivations.

In 1994 Rwanda was composed of three ethnic groups: approximately 85 per cent Hutu, 14 per cent Tutsi, and 1 per cent Twa. The ruling elite, due to mounting social and political tensions coupled with the debilitated economic reality, employed the use of propaganda to malign the Tutsi minority and defer

attention away from the country's problems. On April 6, 1994, the plane carrying Hutu President Juvénal Habyarimana, often described as a dictator, was shot down. This was blamed on the wrong people, Mr. Speaker. Hutu extremists used the assassination as an opportunity to promote their intolerant ideological beliefs, scapegoating the Tutsis as the main cause of Rwanda's problems, in fact. From April to mid-July 20 years ago over 800,000 men, women, and children, sometimes counted up to a million, were massacred. Approximately three-quarters of the Tutsi population were lost.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today because I believe we have a moral duty and privilege to stand up for the rights of those who, for whatever reason, cannot. I speak to the entire Assembly when I say that we must emphasize the things that unite us as human beings rather than highlight the superficial differences between us. At the end of the day, we all want to be respected, we all desire and need to be loved, and there's nothing more human than that. Let us never forget those lives that were pointlessly sacrificed 20 years ago. If we learned lessons, they were not lost in vain.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, let me say a few words about Jim Flaherty. Canada lost a great friend today. Minister Flaherty was as dedicated and patriotic a public servant as you will find anywhere. His leadership as Finance minister helped steer Canada through the worst economic crisis we've seen in decades to a surplus budget and a very bright future. Our thoughts and our deepest condolences are with Jim Flaherty's family.

Flood Recovery and Mitigation in High River

Ms Smith: Since being elected in 2012 I've done my best to inform Albertans about how this government spends, misspends taxpayer dollars. In my home community of High River we see yet another example. Using outdated and incorrect 1992 flood maps, this government has made one particular decision that makes no financial sense, and it is extremely upsetting to the residents of High River. The flawed flood maps situate the community of Beachwood in the floodway. Because of this the government has determined that all of the homes in Beachwood need to be bought out at an estimated cost to taxpayers of \$30 million. This will result in the displacement of 30 families and the destruction of beautiful, perfectly sound homes.

You might ask: but what alternative is there? Well, let me tell you. Over the past few years the community of Beachwood and the town of High River have spent more than \$2 million building a berm to protect the community from hundred-year flood levels. This berm made Beachwood one of the better protected communities in High River. The estimated cost to do the necessary repairs to the berm is \$1 million. Now, a responsible government would examine the updated flood maps – and yes, Premier, they do exist – spend less than a million dollars mitigating the future loss, and redirect the estimated \$29 million saved to rebuild the homes, businesses, and community infrastructure in the rest of High River.

The first item of business our newly elected town council addressed was to determine how they would protect Beachwood with the town's own infrastructure money. After months of meetings between the town and the province the province has moved forward with their irresponsible plan to demolish Beachwood. Mr. Speaker, it's not too late for the Premier to do the right thing and reverse the decision.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Edmonton-Riverview.

Project Brock

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Brock Ruether, a 16-year-old boy from Fairview in my constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, collapsed in May of 2012 during an after-school volleyball practice. Emergency services were immediately contacted, and lay rescuers were instructed to fetch the school's automated external defibrillator, or AED. Tragically, no one on the scene felt comfortable using this instrument. So when emergency medical services arrived 10 minutes later, the device lay on the ground next to Brock, still unused. Brock was transported to a nearby hospital but passed away. He may have been saved had someone used this device.

Since Brock's death the Ruether family has launched a vigorously advocated awareness campaign lovingly named Project Brock. Brock's mother, Kim Ruether, is making it her mission to educate the public on AEDs and their ease of use. She has also partnered with the Regional EMS Foundation. So far Project Brock has placed AEDs in many schools throughout Alberta. She hopes to expand AED installations to all schools but also sees a strong need for these devices in all work environments.

Kim Ruether is also a strong advocate for education and awareness as her son's case is proof that merely installing an AED is not enough. Project Brock encourages schools to create their own training programs for students and teachers, and Kim makes presentations and demonstrates how an AED is used.

The Ruether family has made good progress on their project. They've started with the schools in my constituency, the northwest, and will go on from there, concentrating on small rural schools. Project Brock is encouraging governments to ensure that AEDs are available in schools and public places. I wish to recognize the Ruether family today for devoting their time and energy towards a very worthy cause by encouraging everyone to place AEDs in all areas of public use.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Successful Teams

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, our thoughts and prayers are with Jim Flaherty and his family.

Successful teams are highly accountable organizations. They're not connected through blind loyalty; rather, they are bound by a commitment to a set of principles and a shared vision that every member of the team has a role in contributing towards. Successful nonprofit organizations like Rotary have their values in a four-way test to advance their humanitarian efforts of service above self. Values and visions are also fundamental to the success of the 50 top managed companies, one of those being Avison Young, who, for example, prominently list their values as pillars of their corporate culture.

The Golden Bears hockey team's values are detailed in Wooden's pyramid of success and the belief that it is amazing what can be accomplished when no one cares who gets the credit and that you consciously practise good habits or you will unconsciously develop bad ones. The vision of competing play by play, shift by shift, game by game, season by season leads to

success. Even with new players and coaching changes there is a consistent set of values, vision, and a culture of success.

This year General Manager Stan Marple and Coach Ian Herbers led the Bears to win their 51st Canada West title and record 14th national championship. Other national champions at the University of Alberta include Bears volleyball and Pandas rugby. These are student athletes and role models of success in both academics and athletics. Along with the accomplishments at the University of Alberta in science, technology, health, arts, and business, the Bears and Pandas contribute to this great sense of pride *for the university, the city of Edmonton, and the province of Alberta.**

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Daycare

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As both a resident and representative of a young and growing community in Edmonton-South West I share with many of my constituents a concern for issues regarding child care. Neighbourhoods such as Southbrook, MacEwan, the Hamptons, Windermere, and Ambleside are home to many new families with young children. Understandably, the question of how to care properly for young children while also maintaining a livable income is a constant concern. For many of these families it is a requirement that both parents have steady incomes. The costs of modern home ownership, rent, and feeding a family are considerable.

It is equally understandable that these parents are also concerned about how they can entrust their children to reliable daycare services as they work to earn a living. It makes sense to me that daycare services operated on location at a parent's place of work are the easiest and most desirable option. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is what many parents in Edmonton-South West have been telling me. Since transportation to the nearest child care facility is often an issue, being able to take one's child to work to receive care would alleviate a major source of worry for many parents. It is important that we do what is best for our kids first and foremost, ensuring that they are in safe hands while their parents work to provide for them.

There are also economic advantages to ensuring that child care is convenient and accessible. The simple fact of the matter is that readily available and trustworthy child care means more Albertans in the workplace. I am sure that all of us can appreciate the clear economic benefits of this. An investment in child care is clearly an investment in Alberta's future in more ways than one. It is an investment in our children. It is an investment in our bottom line for the shorter term. There are great child care services and facilities available, but I believe that there's always more that can be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, could I just say thank you for the decorum you showed by listening carefully to all the statements that were just given. That was well done on your part.

Let us move on.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: You are reminded that you are given 35 seconds for each question and 35 seconds for each answer. Let's start the

*The text in italics exceeded the time limit and was not read in the House.

clock with the hon. Member for Highwood, the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Regional Dialysis Service

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I was in Athabasca on Tuesday night at a very well-attended town hall meeting. The number one issue I heard about was the complete absence of dialysis machines for patients with kidney problems. Patients in Athabasca have to travel several hours to Edmonton or Lac La Biche for dialysis several times a week. Some have even had to uproot their lives to move to and live permanently in Edmonton. This treatment is relatively cheap and is potentially life-saving. To the Health minister: why is Athabasca being ignored?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, Athabasca is not being ignored. Contrary to the premise of the hon. member's question, actually, dialysis is a very complicated procedure. Renal failure and renal disease affect increasing numbers of Albertans across the province, and we use a variety of methods to deliver that care. In many cases we do not have sufficient volume to establish an in-patient dialysis unit at a hospital. We use mobile dialysis. We use home dialysis increasingly to meet those needs.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the cost of a dialysis machine is roughly \$50,000. To put that into context, that's about one-fifth of what AHS spends on executive coaching every year. It's just another example of the bloated AHS bureaucracy sucking up taxpayer dollars that are badly needed on the front lines for patients. To the Health minister: isn't it more important for Athabasca patients to get the life-saving treatment they need in their community than for a handful of AHS executives to beef up their resumes?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Education does an excellent job of advocating for his own constituents. In addition to that, he actually takes the time to try to understand and communicate the issues regarding health care for constituents in his area.

Once again, the citizens of Athabasca and the citizens of this province do receive the life-saving services they need. The patients themselves are the best testament to that, the front-line staff are the best testament to that, and any attempt to politicize that discussion does a disservice to all.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills has also been a tireless advocate, and he's done so for dialysis patients. As a result of his hard work and public pressure, Lac La Biche now has five dialysis machines serving patients in their community. My question is to the Education minister, who sits at the cabinet table and is also the MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. Is he going to learn a lesson in public advocacy from my colleague, or do the people of his constituency have to elect a Wildrose MLA in order to get an MLA to stand up for their interests?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit speechless at what to even say to that. I work incredibly hard for my constituents. I think that many of them would be the first testament to that as they point to the many things that we've even announced in the Athabasca region in the last couple of years, including the school that was just announced and the pipeline training facility at Boyle or the twinning of highway 63, which the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills tried to take a little bit of credit for but is, of course, because of the good work of this government. That's where the credit lies.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Second main set of questions.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister needs to have another town hall meeting in Athabasca.

Progressive Conservative Party Trust Account

Ms Smith: Last week I asked the Premier about government policy that allows the PC Party to do things which no other political party can do. Albertans are obviously concerned by the double standard in legislation that has allowed the PCs to grandfather in the TAPCAL trust. They are concerned about what is being hidden in the trust. I want to repeat my question to the Premier. Will this government do the right thing and immediately introduce legislation to fully disclose and permanently dissolve the TAPCAL trust?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to take this opportunity to recognize the contribution that Jim Flaherty has made to this country. I had the opportunity to serve with him when I was Minister of Justice and he was Justice minister in Ontario. I had an opportunity to work with him directly. He made a huge contribution to Ontario and to the country as a whole.

With respect to the TAPCAL trust I've talked with the president of the PC Association of Alberta and asked them to review the terms of the trust in terms of how it could be wound down. It should be clear that that trust was set up in legislation with respect to the transition from an old form of finances to the new form of finances. Anybody could have done it at the time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has stated several times that the PCs only take out the interest from the trust as required by law. That does not appear to be the case, however. Media reports suggest that in 1992 the PC Party removed \$513,000 from the trust. That couldn't have been just interest. The Premier has had over a week to get briefed on this matter. Can he tell us what legislation actually prevents the PCs from adding funds to the trust or removing more than just the interest from the trust?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act makes it clear that any money that's raised for political purposes has to be done under the context of that act. The hon. member probably has had enough time to study that act to understand that as well.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Smith: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We still don't know what the rules are regarding this trust because they don't have to report on it.

Mr. Speaker, the government might suggest that the creation of special loopholes to give advantages to the PC Party is something that happened a long time ago, but in 2012 the Justice minister made changes to election laws which make it illegal for political parties to have foundations with more than \$5,000 in them, except that the government once again exempted the PC Party from that law. To the Justice minister: why does the government continue to pass laws that treat his party one way and all the other parties differently?

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, we have a Chief Electoral Officer in this province that every party agreed to very recently. His name is Glen Resler. If she thinks that there's something improper that's been done, I encourage her – in fact, I insist – to contact Mr. Resler and make a comment, make a complaint. We are not in the business of policing individual political parties in this Chamber.

The Speaker: The hon. leader. Third main set of questions.

Ms Smith: Actually, it is the Justice minister's job to create election law reforms.

Flood Advisory and Warning System

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, flood season is upon us again. We have had flooding in downtown Peace River and the Carstairs and Strathmore areas as well. Albertans want to know that we will have quality and timely information from our flood forecasters. Critics of our forecasting system have contemptuously called it now casting, meaning that residents don't hear that it might flood until it actually is flooding. Can the Premier tell us what steps have been taken to improve the quality and timeliness of information Albertans will get about possible floods?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an important question. I know that all Albertans do want to know what's going on. I can say that we are measuring the snowpack on a regular basis. I can tell this Assembly that the snowpack is a little bit above average. We've put more monitoring systems in place along our river system so that we have better measurements as the water rises. We're also putting in early-warning systems for communities downstream so that when we have the flood advisory from our experts, we can make sure those communities are made aware. We also are investing right now in making sure that all of our emergency supplies and the information we need are being updated as we speak.

Ms Smith: The current flood advisory system is deeply flawed. It only has three levels: high stream flow advisories, flood watches, and flood warnings. However, a flood warning isn't actually a warning; it's a statement of the blatantly obvious. By the time you get to a flood warning stage, you are already under water. Is any work being done to improve the system used to describe flood threats so that they actually provide meaningful and timely warnings in advance of the water breaching the banks?

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we do have the monitoring in place. Again, you know, we can't predict the weather, but we do have more monitoring put into our rivers. I say to you that we have measured the snowpack. At the present time we do have some flood warnings and some flood advisories out because we've had heavy snow in our flat areas and very warm temperatures, which has created some issues. But I can say that most flooding is because of intense rainfall in the eastern slopes of the Rockies. We will have monitoring in place and people in place to make sure that people get the early warnings they need.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, one of the issues during last year's flood was the lack of timely warnings to the residents of High River. We were very lucky that the flood struck mid-morning rather than in the middle of the night; otherwise, the death count would have been much, much higher. Last week High River unveiled its new alert system, which includes direct notification and public sirens.

But I wonder what's happening in other municipalities. What steps have been taken in other communities to make sure that a middle of the night flood doesn't become a tragedy?

2:00

Mr. Campbell: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, as I stated, we're monitoring our rivers, especially in the June period of time, when we're going to see most of our flooding because we'll have snowpack melt plus rainfall. We'll have early-warning systems in place all along the river systems, and we'll have people on 24-hour alert to make sure that people get the advance notice that they need. But, again, understand that in last year's flooding, in 2013, the fact that we had 214 millimetres of rainfall in 24 hours was unprecedented, and the ability to have any idea what impact that was going to have downstream – it was very hard to predict.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Alberta Liberals our heartfelt condolences and prayers for Mr. Flaherty and his family. Thanks to him for serving our great country.

Health Care Performance Indicators

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot about the quarter billion dollars wasted by AHS consultants, but we haven't seen the latest AHS quarterly performance reports because the Health minister refuses to release them. Well, the Alberta Liberals FOIPed them, and I have them right here in my hand. Here's what they show. Heart bypass surgery wait times: fail. Hip and knee surgery replacement wait times: fail. Physician-staff engagement: fail. Patients admitted from ER: fail. To the Minister of Health. The doctors, nurses, staff will give you free advice . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we changed the performance indicators that we use to report on the performance of the health system some time ago, and we changed them in order that we could accomplish two things: that we could report on indicators that were actually meaningful to Albertans and, secondly, that we could report on indicators that were directly comparable to other provinces and territories. If we take the issue of hip and knee replacements, for example, we know that today Alberta is exceeding the national average in wait times for hip and knee surgery. Does that mean we're satisfied with today's performance? Absolutely not. We can do better. But these statistics that the hon. member was presenting out of context . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. leader. First sup.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They changed them from world-class 90 percentiles to averages, which hide their failures, and they still won't publish them every quarter.

Mr. Speaker, consultants aren't the only thing AHS wasted a quarter billion dollars on. The number of people waiting in hospital for an alternate level of care, including long-term care, has increased from 436 to 535. That's about another quarter billion dollars wasted by providing the wrong care. Warnings that privatizing home care and long-term care and that cutbacks to community supports would have both a high human and dollar cost have been ignored for years by this PC government. To the Health minister: can't you see that your failed seniors' policy is not only wasting money, hurting people . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, what this hon. member can't see is that the answer to every problem in the health care system is not simply beefing up resources in an emergency department. In fact, despite the increasing growth in this province, 140,000 people last year, we have seen a decline in the wait times for placement into continuing care of 37 per cent between 2009-10 and 2012-13. I think we're doing exceedingly well, or I should say that the front-line staff are doing exceedingly well, at reducing the time people are waiting for critical services while running the health system that is growing the fastest . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the minister is right. The health care staff are doing a great job; just the government isn't. By the way, your own record shows you're failing.

A quarter billion dollars on consultants, a quarter billion dollars on hospitalizing people who don't need to be hospitalized, and we haven't even mentioned the cost of delays in care. The half billion dollars that we have discussed is pretty close to what's needed to build a new Misericordia hospital that would serve all of Edmonton and northern Alberta. The Misericordia should have been replaced years ago. Instead, this government is throwing good money after bad in the maintenance of an old hospital. To the Health minister: will you commit to building a new Misericordia hospital? If yes, when? If no . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that all Albertans continue to be impressed by the level of attention that the hon. member is drawing to one of many hospitals, in fact, 99 hospitals, across this province. We have invested over \$19 million in critical infrastructure repairs at the Misericordia. As I have said to this House before, and I'll say it again, we are well into the planning process for a new hospital for the city of Edmonton and to serve the larger capital region. That process is not going to be determined by this House; it's going to be determined by experts. We will continue to increase capacity at unprecedented rates in this country.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Student Gay-straight Alliance Requests

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Education minister asked yesterday for proof that any students had ever been denied the right to set up a gay-straight alliance in their school. Today it's come to light that the minister was not only aware of at least one such case; he actually wrote a letter to the St. Albert school board supporting just such a decision. Mr. Minister, can you please explain this contradiction?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the situation he's talking about happened two years ago. I am not aware of another case in the last two years. My understanding with respect to that case is that it was handled at the local level, which is where, we would submit, these things should be handled. We had a student who was in that situation. He brought that forward. He wanted to set up a GSA. The school board, the local principal, the administration recognized that they had an issue, and my understanding is

that they've dealt with that issue to the satisfaction of all concerned. That's my understanding of the situation, and I haven't heard anything to the contrary in the last two years.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I didn't know that there was a statute of limitations on the truth. The minister has suggested to us that because his involvement took place more than two years ago, the proof that he asked for was not – I mean, I'm flabbergasted that he would kind of use that excuse for not telling the House the facts, that there are cases where GSAs are prohibited by schools. He was aware of it, and he actually wrote a letter to support it. Why, Minister?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the letter I wrote said that I was in support of the local school board making decisions that are appropriate for the local school. My understanding is not that the GSA was refused but that they dealt with the issue to the satisfaction of all concerned. One of the issues was, to my understanding . . .

Mr. Hehr: Wow.

Mr. J. Johnson: . . . and this is what happens in many schools . . .

Mr. Hehr: Wow.

Mr. J. Johnson: . . . that kids come forward with the bullying issue. But there are other students in need that have bullying issues . . .

Mr. Hehr: Wow.

Mr. J. Johnson: . . . and there might be a bullying issue in the school, so they want to set up a support group for all students . . .

Mr. Hehr: Wow.

Mr. J. Johnson: . . . and not be exclusionary to others in just setting up a GSA. Those are decisions that should be made at the local level. That's what was supported in the letter.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, one more "wow," and you'll be wowing with me.

The hon. leader for the ND opposition. Final supplemental.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, wow. The minister told us that there was no proof that kids who wanted to set up a GSA had ever been stopped by a school or a school board, yet he knew that there was, and he didn't tell us that. Now he's using weasel words to try to get around the fact that he did not give us a statement in accordance with what he knew to be true. So what is the problem, Minister? Why can't you tell the truth?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking the truth. I, obviously, in 2012 was aware that there was a student that brought forward a request for a GSA. I'm not aware of any outstanding issues with students bringing forward requests for GSAs that have been turned down, that have not been resolved to the students' satisfaction. My understanding was that in that situation it was resolved to the student's satisfaction.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Kindly curtail your preambles from here on in.

Let's go with Calgary-Varsity, then Calgary-Fish Creek.

Carbon Emissions Reduction

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent UN report warning of growing risks to health, economies, and food sources from climate change has intensified the spotlight on carbon rules. My constituents in Calgary-Varsity pay attention to this issue, and they're asking good questions about Alberta's role in reducing emissions and protecting social licence. To the Minister of Environment and SRD. Many of my constituents, including employees in energy companies, want clarity and certainty on carbon rules. Do you plan to strengthen the specified gas emitters regulation, up for renewal on September 1?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that, you know, we do have very clear rules in the province of Alberta about greenhouse gas emissions. We are the only jurisdiction that has a carbon tax. We are the only jurisdiction that has a clean energy fund. We are right now in discussions with all of our stakeholders across the province about future funding moving forward. Our greenhouse gas emitters regulations expire September 1, and we want to see a seamless transition moving forward.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: To the same minister: what plans does your ministry have to reduce carbon emissions by further improving energy efficiency policies, including demand-side management? How will you be consulting Albertans on these often very personal choices, and what's your expected time frame for coming forward with these policies?

An Hon. Member: Forty years.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:10

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, it won't be 40 years. It will be a lot quicker than that.

I can say to you that we are looking at a wide range of options for energy efficiency, both commercial and residential. I'll be meeting with the tech fund board next week to talk about programs being in place immediately. Again, we understand that, you know, the eyes of the world are on us. As we look at market access and want to get our product to market, we understand that we have to be good environmental stewards. We'll meet that challenge.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: My final question is to the Minister of Energy. Following our budget review last night and her indication that the alternative and renewable framework is going forward, which everyone is very excited about, I'd like some more information for my constituents about the process for engagement and how the public will be able to understand what's going on.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. Certainly, I have a round-table that I've organized for next week to talk to our stakeholders that are very interested in the A and R framework. I want to hear from them first within our energy-only market, electricity market, how they may see, first and foremost, how A and R may come through. [interjections] Then after we have that engagement, we'll have further discussion with regard to Albertans on that. First and

foremost, those that are very interested directly are stakeholders. I want to get feedback from them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, I'd prefer you listen to the questions and the answers. The noise level is rising up a bit. It's been not too bad. Let's bring it back down. If you must converse amongst yourselves, do so quietly or go outside the Chamber.

Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Sherwood Park.

Alberta Health Services Consulting Contracts

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we revealed that a quarter million dollar contract was awarded to an AHS executive the day after she retired. The contract wasn't tendered but simply handed to her, no questions asked. Records show that the company set up by this exec was established on August 4, 2011, while she was still an AHS employee. Of course, doing business with a current employee is a no-no, so AHS waited until the clock struck midnight on quitting day before giving her the contract. Has the minister taken the time to review this information? Does he share Albertans' concerns, and if so, what is he going to do to fix it?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I don't share and what my colleagues don't share is conjecture and a rush to judgment about either the value of someone's work or the circumstances under which they acquire that work. We start from the position that there are rules in place and that those rules have been observed. I have inquired about this situation with the office of the official administrator, and I'm waiting to hear from him. But I want to be very, very clear: these hon. members have presented exactly no evidence to suggest that anything here is untoward.

Mrs. Forsyth: Oh, minister. Just read the FOIP.

Given that yesterday in response to our question AHS didn't deny the fact, they didn't apologize, and, in fact, they vigorously defended it because shockingly – shockingly – the contract was apparently awarded in full compliance with policy, does the minister agree that a policy that allows the gifting of a quarter of a million dollars to an executive who retired the day before is a pretty shoddy policy that needs to be revised?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is, as I indicated, that I'm in some discussion now with the official administrator about this. What I did learn yesterday, that I think all members would be interested in, is that \$200 million of that \$250 million in consulting contracts was for IT systems, IT systems that consolidated the former health regions into one, that saved this organization \$660 million in administrative savings over a similar period. I think that's a pretty good return on investment.

Mrs. Forsyth: I'll tell you what a good return on investment for your IT is. Wait till we bring forward the whistle-blower.

Given that reports say that the same former executive still has executive coaching contracts on the books, does the minister actually believe executive coaching is a priority for Albertans?

Mr. Horne: What I believe, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a responsibility as elected representatives not to use this Chamber to besmirch the reputation of any employee, whether they're a senior executive or front-line staff, and not to run roughshod with conjecture about policies and procedures that, obviously, the questioner doesn't understand. As I said, I've inquired with the official administrator about this particular contract. I will satisfy

myself as minister that the appropriate rules have been followed in this case, and I thank the hon. member not to use this Chamber inappropriately for that purpose.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That's what points of order are for, if necessary.

Strathcona Community Hospital

Ms Olesen: Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been waiting many years for a hospital to serve the nearly 100,000 residents of Sherwood Park and Strathcona county. While it is good news that the new facility is finally ready to open, there are some concerns with whether this facility is actually a hospital and whether there will actually be an increase in services. To the Minister of Health: how can you call this a hospital given the fact that it will only provide limited emergency services and that residents of our community that need care for more than 24 hours will be taken to facilities in Edmonton?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'd certainly like to begin by thanking the hon. member and her colleague the hon. Associate Minister – Seniors for their advocacy. They have worked very hard to bring this project to completion.

This is a \$130 million project that will see some of the most advanced care that's provided in our province. The facility is in fact an approved hospital or will be designated by myself as an approved hospital under the Hospitals Act. It includes many features, most notably a 24/7 emergency department supported by 27 beds, something the community identified as their highest priority.

Ms Olesen: To the same minister: what kinds of services are being provided at this facility, and how are they different from what we have now?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a growing number of places but relatively few places across the province that will offer the range of services that will be available at the Strathcona community hospital. In addition to the 24/7 emergency department, the hospital will feature a CT scanner, ultrasound, and X-ray services. There will be a number of outpatient specialty clinics that will eliminate the need for residents to come into Edmonton to receive those services. IV therapy, women's health, teen health, and seniors' health are among the other programs that will be offered.

Ms Olesen: Finally, to the same minister: my constituents are adamant about the importance of phase 2 of this hospital. Will there be a reconsideration of phase 2 of the hospital as Sherwood Park's population continues to grow?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member would understand that when we undertake studies for health facilities, we seek to build health facilities that will meet the needs of residents today and well into the future. We believe we have accomplished that with the Strathcona community hospital. We do have room on the site for future expansion if and when a need is determined for additional services to be made available. But I can't stress enough how much this model of care represents the state of the art in 2014 and takes us a long way from the traditional hospital model of the 1970s and '80s.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Traffic Court Reform Initiative

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know this Justice minister is considering some radical new changes to Alberta's traffic court system. Under a so-called New Age plan citizens accused of traffic offences will no longer have the right to appear before a court. Officers who issue tickets will no longer have to attend hearings, and no evidence would ever need to be called into question. Albertans from across the province are sounding the alarm against this minister's plan, saying that it's an attack on their basic, fundamental civil liberties and rights. To the minister: why are you so insistent on taking away the rights of Albertans?

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, virtually nothing that that member said here is actually true. We've just embarked on a consultation, which ended March 31, asking people, asking traffic commissioners, lawyers, police officers, the public at large what their experience has been with traffic court. We're tabulating the responses, but there's only one thing that we've decided. You'll always have the right to fight a traffic ticket in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member. First supplemental.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under the minister's proposed changes anyone challenging a traffic violation would appear before a government-appointed adjudicator, not a court, and any further appeals would be heard by an administrative tribunal, not an appeals court, how can the minister guarantee that this new process will treat Albertans with the same procedural fairness and equality that the courts would afford?

Mr. Denis: I'm not sure that this member heard my answer the first time. There have been no decisions made as to traffic court reform other than the fact that you will have the ability to fight a traffic court ticket in Alberta, period. We will look at some different changes, Mr. Speaker, but none of that has been decided, so this member can stop this fearmongering.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under the minister's proposed changes rules of evidence and procedure as well as a presumption of innocence and a right to face your accuser would no longer apply and given that experts from across the province resoundingly say that these changes will violate the basic rights and civil liberties of Albertans and encourage them to plead guilty, will the minister do the right thing, listen to Albertans, and reverse course on his outrageous plan today?

2:20

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, the same question and again the same answer. There's nothing that's been decided other than the fact that Albertans will always have the right to fight a traffic court ticket. The one thing I'll let this member know is that since 2008 in this province with more and more people, who keep moving to this province because the government is so good, what has happened is that in some cases you've seen traffic court lead times increase more and more and more, about two and a half times in the city of Calgary alone. It's about access to justice. This member still practises law. Maybe he should know about that. [interjections]

The Speaker: At this time we'll move on, please. Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I know where all of the government's communications money is going. It's going to invent a new language in the Justice ministry under their proposed traffic court reform. The old guilty plea that used to go on your record along with demerit points will be called a discounted fine. A person who is not a judge or a JP is called an adjudicator, but they can't judge or adjudicate anything. A breach of natural justice is now called efficiency. To the Minister of Justice: why is the traffic reform written so that people believe they can still challenge a ticket in traffic court when, in fact . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't sure that this temperament was in the Wildrose caucus. It's quite interesting about that. Notwithstanding that, I'll say again, for the fourth time today, that the only thing that is not being considered is the right to fight a traffic ticket. Currently the system uses very few judges. They use justices of the peace and traffic court commissioners. I don't know if this member or other members have issue with that at all. Procedural fairness as well as the right to fight a traffic ticket in Alberta is not at issue.

The Speaker: The hon. member. First supplemental.

Ms Blakeman: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that for the most part, the majority part, minor traffic offences are not in criminal courts – they are in the traffic court system – and given that courtrooms in Alberta sit empty for lack of judges, clerks, and prosecutors, why does the minister's consultation document indicate that his new model would free up criminal case courtrooms? [interjections]

Mr. Denis: I'll tell you why . . .

The Speaker: I wonder if we could just keep the noise level down, okay? I appreciate that there is a good question.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, come on.

The Speaker: Now, I don't care if you're offended or not, Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: I know you don't. They're just clapping.

The Speaker: I'm trying to tell you that I just would like the noise level brought down. If not, then you'll have to forfeit a question.

Let's have an answer, please.

Mr. Denis: In one word, Mr. Speaker, because it will. Often traffic measures can be heard before a Provincial Court judge, particularly outside of Calgary and Edmonton because there simply isn't the volume there. On top of that, matters in traffic court that deal with Charter appeals or deal with criminal offences are already heard before a Provincial Court judge. On top of that, they still use the same buildings, the same security, the same court clerk staff. If this member would like a tour of the courthouse, I'd be happy to arrange that for her.

Ms Blakeman: No. I understand the difference between the two courts. That's okay.

Back to the same minister: what does the minister have up his sleeve next? We've already had property taken away, like an innocent grandma's condo, and sold on the basis of suspicion of

illegal activity; people pleading guilty in order to get their licences restored and to get their car back in less than a year; and now a proposal to take away a person's day in court. Mr. Minister, what's next? [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

The Speaker: You know, what I find particularly offensive is when I've just asked for something to be done and then you purposefully ignore it and go up even higher over the top. Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, for example, you were the loudest. I'm sorry, but I find that highly offensive, and if it happens again, I'm going to have to deal with you. Okay?

Mr. Anderson: Point of clarification.

The Speaker: A point of clarification has been noted. Let's finish up. [interjection]

Hon. Member for Airdrie, your point of clarification has been noted, all right? Sit down and zip it up. [interjection] Sit down and zip it up. I'm not having a debate with you.

Let's go on with the answer.

Traffic Court Reform Initiative (continued)

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What's next is that we as a government will continue to build upon our record of access to justice but also procedural fairness and improving court times and looking after safe communities. Many of those things this member had already alluded to.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Misericordia Community Hospital

Mr. Eggen: Thanks.

Some Hon. Members: Shh.

Mr. Eggen: Oh, no. I want a little bit of noise. Come on, you guys.

At the Misericordia hospital it's not just sewage leaks and faulty gas lines. On average twice a day staff are forced into crisis overcapacity management. Documents that Alberta New Democrats released today show that the Mis was running over capacity almost 600 times in the last 14 months. Almost every day this hospital is either out of space, understaffed, or both. To the Minister of Health: Edmontonians find this situation completely unacceptable. Why don't you do something about it?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are and have been working with Covenant Health for some time to address the issues at the Misericordia. I can't count the number of times now that I've been asked and have answered these questions in the House. A \$19.2 million commitment to critical infrastructure repair at the Misericordia is a major commitment, knowing, of course, that there is a limit to the remaining useful life of this facility. It is one of the oldest facilities in the province. It is also in one of the highest demand areas of the province. We will continue to invest the dollars that are necessary to keep things operational at the Misericordia.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that overcapacity means five patients in a room, overcapacity means that not all the essential equipment is available that patients need, and overcapacity means many more patients for the same amount of staff, can this minister then explain why, yet again, funding to start building a new Misericordia hospital is missing from this year's budget?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, one thing I want to make very clear – and I certainly acknowledge the infrastructure issues at the Misericordia, and I have thanked the staff in the past, and I will thank them again for their ability to cope with those particular challenges. But at no time has the quality of care that is delivered at the Misericordia hospital been in question. It is not in question today. It was not in question a year ago. It was not in question 10 years ago. We see demands at the Misericordia that we see at other major hospitals across the province. The short-term issues have been addressed by a \$19 million commitment. The bigger issues of new hospital capacity for Edmonton . . .

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, given that overcapacity is chronic at the Misericordia hospital and this government has put in no plan to build that capacity, can you really blame Edmontonians for suspecting that this PC government has no intention to build a new, west-end, full-service, active treatment hospital now or in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, the plans that we have under way are the same plans that I've described in answers to previous questions. We are looking at infrastructure hospital needs for Edmonton and for the capital region today. The issues around infrastructure at the Misericordia are serious issues. They are short-term issues. The longer term planning is well under way, as I've said, for the Edmonton zone. We will be looking at opportunities across the capital region that we need to capitalize on. In the short term our commitment to the Misericordia stands.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

Infrastructure Planning and Maintenance

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of November the Good Shepherd elementary school in Edmonton was listed as having a good facility condition rating by Alberta Infrastructure, yet – yet – the roof was leaking and dangerous black mould was growing. This government's negligence resulted in students' learning being disrupted as they were forced to relocate. This comes on the heels of sewer backups at the Wainwright hospital and significant deficiencies at the Misericordia hospital in Edmonton. Will the minister of black mould and sewer backups tell Albertans why these are not government priorities? [interjections]

2:30

The Speaker: Really? Really, hon. member? How old are we? Do you want to rephrase that question in a proper way, or would you like me to just shut it down right now?

Mr. Barnes: Will the minister responsible for the black mould and the sewer backup please tell Albertans why this isn't important?

The Speaker: I assume there is some minister here who knows what he is talking about. Go ahead and answer, Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for pointing out in the course of his question the wide range of infrastructure that this government provides for the citizens of Alberta: many schools, many hospitals, and many other things. Part of that process is to get the most life out of those facilities that we can. The other part is to look after them. The hon. member does point out a legitimate problem at the Good Shepherd school. We are working on it. He is right to point out that it has caused some disruptions. The fact is that we're dealing with it, and we'll get the kids back in the classroom. It's an important issue.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Talk is cheap. Given that this school was rated as good and given that by this government's own standards students were sentenced to attend a school infested with black mould for an unknown amount of time, will the minister explain why this government prioritized \$250 million on PR consultants rather than providing a safe environment for our children and our students?

Mr. McIver: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member pointed out that we had the children out, so we did provide a safe environment. What we're sentencing Alberta children to are new classrooms, improved classrooms, classrooms that he and his party wouldn't be building if they were here. [interjections] We're building Alberta. We're putting the infrastructure in place because Alberta's kids matter. We have done that, and we'll continue to do that as part of building Alberta. The member should get onboard. His constituents might even appreciate the support for the schools that they need. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. Member, as soon as the rest your caucus silences a bit, why don't you proceed with your final statement.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, we would build and balance the budget.

Given that this government has not been a good shepherd to the students at Good Shepherd elementary or a good steward of Alberta's provincial infrastructure, when will this PC government eliminate the \$817 million in deferred maintenance to the province's schools and the over \$1 billion in deferred maintenance to our hospitals?

Mr. McIver: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, Albertans will want to know that our operating budget is fully balanced.

The hon. member talks about what they'd do, but their plan has a \$4 billion hole in it that they cannot explain. Our government, meanwhile, continues to build new infrastructure and look after the old infrastructure. I can tell the hon. member and all Albertans that we will never be fully caught up on our infrastructure repairs because Alberta keeps growing. We keep building new things, and we keep going back and repairing the old ones. It's a process that won't end, and thank goodness we're here to do it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Land Annexation Process

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the city of Edmonton arbitrarily announced that it was planning to acquire some 38,000 acres of Leduc county, including the International Airport, by a hostile annexation bid. This move would gut the economic base of Leduc county and affect the bottom line of the

city of Leduc. As well, it would stifle the future expansion of Nisku industrial park. It's all being done in the name of subsidizing Edmonton residential tax rates. My constituents are angry. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: can Edmonton just wave its fingers and make this happen, and will you allow it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important question. As the province continues to grow, we're seeing incredible growth pressures on all of our municipalities: our big cities, our mid-size cities, and other communities. As part of that, annexations are becoming more and more of a reality. No one can wave their fingers and create an annexation. It is an incredibly complex process that requires the discussion of all the parties, including the municipalities and the landowners, to come to agreement on how this can proceed.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: Mr. Minister, what can my constituents do to have their voices heard in order to express their utter displeasure and opposition to this tax grab by the city of Edmonton?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time there has been no annexation application made by the city of Edmonton. Any municipality wanting to annex land needs to negotiate with the other municipality. They've got to consult the public. They've got to consult the landowners. Anyone objecting to any one of these can file an objection with the Municipal Government Board.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: Mr. Minister, what measures are you taking to bring some sanity to this process and to find a reasonable solution?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is actually a very long and complex procedure, and it does require the parties to work together. Nobody will be making a quick annexation of anything without properly negotiating and working with all of their neighbours to ensure that all of the municipalities are treated fairly through the process.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Calgary-East.

Life Skills Education and Training

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's rapidly growing economy is both a blessing and a challenge. For people who know how to work and want to, there are plenty of choices. For employers looking for help, there's a chronic shortage in some areas. They've told trade schools: you're doing a good job teaching apprentices how to perform trade tasks, but some lack life skills. Would the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour please tell us what's being done to help in this area?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the federal government and our provincial government are working very closely at making sure that the skill gap that exists in our country right now is

narrowed as much as possible because it is our common number one priority that all jobs that are being made available in Canada should be made available to Canadians first. But in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Services there are a number of programs like Women Building Futures that we have in place, where we not only bring unemployed Albertans to employability but provide them with the wraparound services that allow them to stay employed and help them to deal with some of the life issues that they may be facing at this point in time.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that employers and their customers need associates who know how to show up for work on time, are reliable and trustworthy, are self-motivated, and have the capacity to learn, what is the Education minister doing to see that high school students have these characteristics by the time they graduate?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it's a great question. There are a number of things happening, including some of the great programs that are in our high schools in terms of the dual crediting programs we've just announced here this last year, where industry and K to 12 and postsecondary were blurring the lines between those: the RAP programs, the career and technology studies, and the career and life management skills program, which is high school. Really, it's about relevant learning to make sure that kids are prepared to enter into that global economy, which is one of the reasons that we actually want to talk to the global economy players as we develop our education system, which is another step we're taking.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that children need to learn to be accountable for the consequences of their choices, does the minister think a curriculum redesign could be modified to include ensuring that all graduates from high school have the life skills necessary to prepare them for postsecondary education and employment in the real world?

Mr. J. Johnson: I think that's a very good point, Mr. Speaker, and it's absolutely one of the things that Albertans have asked us to look at and one of the reasons that we want a broad perspective from Albertans as we do some of the curriculum and ongoing work. Let's be clear. This is not inviting big oil to come in and write curriculum but letting all Albertans and people from the business community and those leaders that see what kind of skills our kids need or might be lacking to succeed once they get out of our education system. We're taking that very seriously, and we're listening to those views of parents and others around Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by Little Bow.

Home Care

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a constituent who has been trying to get home care for her sick husband, who is 92 years old. It took five days for her to speak with home care, and she was told it is a two-months-plus waiting time for an in-home assessment. Even when an emergency request was put in by an emergency room doctor, it took a week for someone to contact her. My question is to the hon. Minister of Health. How is this acceptable in this great province of ours?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, while I can't speak to the specific situation the hon. member has raised, I would certainly agree it is not acceptable. What I can tell him is that on average clients are seen for home-care referrals within two to five days, and of course when an immediate need is identified, the prospective client for home care is seen immediately. Often these assessments take place in the hospital prior to discharge. As the hon. member points out, it's very, very important that we also pay close attention to community referrals, that Alberta Health Services receives every day.

2:40

The Speaker: Thank you.
Hon. member, first sup.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is being done to fix this obviously broken system?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't necessarily agree that the system is broken. What I would tell the hon. member is that Alberta has increased home-care funding by 25 per cent since 2010. I would venture to say that that's among the highest increases you would find anywhere in Canada. I can also tell the hon. member that the number of home-care clients in 2012-13 was over 108,000 province-wide. This is a challenge that we face as a province that's growing rapidly, and we do need to work to improve the timeliness of care.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, if it's not broken, it's not working properly. So how can we expect the home-care service to be operating the way it is intended to and that those in need will be receiving the service that they desperately require?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, absolutely, the majority of patients across the province and all patients who need care urgently, including home care, are receiving that care. Obviously, in the case of this hon. member's constituent the timeliness of the service was lacking, and I'd be pleased to look into that one individual case for the hon. member. But it's important to note, as with other health care services, that home care is delivered on the basis of the urgency of the client's needs.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Statement by the Speaker

Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day Program

The Speaker: Hon. members, just before we go on with private members' statements, could I just draw your attention to the MLA for a Day brochure that was put onto your desks? We are undersubscribed at the moment, the same as we were last year. Only 34 out of 87 constituencies are represented at the moment. I'm sorry, but the deadline is actually tomorrow, so if you could get something to us, we could maybe hold it till Monday or something along that line. Please do your best to publicize this program again. Thank you.

In 30 seconds from now we'll continue with Members' Statements, starting with Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, your member's statement.

AISH Wait Times

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are roughly 46,000 Albertans receiving AISH. In 2012 the province increased those benefits by \$400 per month. This was especially helpful in my constituency. The cost of living in Fort McMurray far outstrips anywhere else in the province. However, I spoke to agencies and recipients in my area and was told that the length of time to qualify for AISH can be up to a year, depending on the worker assigned, and that even then they may be denied.

I was told about a single mom currently supporting her family on \$400 child-support payments while she waits, and she applied months ago.

Many of you know my chief of staff, Nickola Walker. Nicky works hard supporting me and the Member for Calgary-Foothills. She sits on numerous boards and is generally just a busy body. You may also know that she and her partner, Patrick, have four beautiful children. As Nicky says: they keep us hopping. Well, what you might not know is that Nicky's mother, Virginia Hoffarth, from Monarch seemingly suffered a stroke in September. It was later determined that she developed late-onset MS. Virginia is no longer able to drive a school bus, which she did lovingly for many years. She cannot perform her previous job as a RITE operator at the Claesholm care centre, a position that she held for over a decade. She finds her illness has greatly decreased her ability to perform even simple functions.

So Virginia sought AISH funding. She didn't want to. She's a proud southern Albertan who doesn't believe in money for nothing. But the excessive length of time to qualify has left Nicky's family financially supporting her.

The Member for Little Bow has also tried to help. He visited them, wrote letters, and made many calls, but it seems nothing has helped. Virginia's AISH worker has said that they're five to six months behind. Virginia, luckily, has a family who is able to come out and help where they can.

But what about other Albertans who do not have that assistance? I worry that these most vulnerable Albertans are waiting such excessive periods to receive funding. While I applaud the decision to increase the payments to AISH recipients, what good is it if people can't actually get it?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice, did you have a notice of motion you wanted to give today regarding written questions, perhaps motions for returns for next week?

Mr. Denis: Yes.

The Speaker: Do please proceed.

Mr. Denis: Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) to advise the House that on Monday, April 14, 2014, written questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11 as well as 15 up to and including Written Question 41 will be accepted. I further advise this House that written questions 3, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, and 14 will be dealt with.

Also, on Monday, April 14, 2014, motions for returns 2, 3, 7, and 8 will be accepted, and motions for returns 1, 4, 5, and 6 will be dealt with at that juncture.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of.

Bill 7

Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2014

Mr. Campbell: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance I request leave to introduce Bill 7, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2014. 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, the proposed act will amend our personal and corporate income tax acts to accommodate technical and administrative changes that parallel federal government changes that have been a long time coming. The proposed legislation also implements a tax regime for qualifying environmental trusts to help facilitate the accumulation of funds for future reclamation of pipeline and oil sands sites. These are revenue-neutral changes and will encourage the creation of trusts here in Alberta, where the majority of pipeline and oil sands activities occur.

Proposed changes to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act will prevent unintended tax increases resulting from federal changes to the dividend tax credit system. Other amendments are for housekeeping purposes that preserve the integrity of our tax system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

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

Bill 205

Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Distress and Neglect) Amendment Act, 2014

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 205, the Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Distress and Neglect) Amendment Act, 2014.

Bill 205 would increase the fines and/or impose imprisonment on individuals perpetrating excessive abuse or neglect of animals. I've heard from many in my community as well as across Alberta that the horrible acts of animal owners such as those that occurred in Calgary in January of this year and the horrible loss of Quanto, the police dog, as well as many others do not carry a stiff enough penalty. I'm urging my colleagues to consider this bill. It sends a strong message that severe abuse and neglect will not be tolerated by Albertans. It is a moral and personal shameless audacity to see these horrible acts inflicted on the helpless and dependent animals that share our lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood or someone on behalf of.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood 50 of over 4,000 postcards our office has received asking this PC government to restore consistent and reliable funding to postsecondary education in Alberta. The postcards, collected by the Non-Academic Staff Association at the University of Alberta, are clear evidence the government is not listening to the demands of Albertans for a well-funded postsecondary system that is both affordable and accessible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on behalf of.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. On behalf of my colleague for Calgary-Buffalo I'd like to table copies of a media report around a young man who tried to start a gay-straight alliance at his high school but, in fact, was turned down. The high school said, "It's simply philosophically not who we are, or how we come to be as a community that is in solidarity with everybody's need at the same time." It also mentions that the Education minister said that he wasn't aware of the boy's attempt to start the GSA.

The second two tablings that I have are related, Mr. Speaker. The first is a copy of the second-quarter report AHS Performance Dashboard Q2 from Alberta Health Services. These, obviously, are available internally but haven't been released externally until now. The second is the appropriate number of copies of the AHS measurement dashboard from the third quarter, which actually was the 1st of March 2014, but we'll release it now, in mid-April.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we had one point of clarification requested by Airdrie. He has since withdrawn his need for that to be responded to. We also had a point of order by the Minister of Justice, and he, too, has asked that that be withdrawn. Other than that, I have no other points of order, so we can move on.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 6

New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2014

[Adjourned debate March 20: Mr. Weadick]

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

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise as the Liberal opposition critic on Bill 6, the New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2014, and say happy things about it, which doesn't happen very often, so we should all celebrate. [some applause] Thank you very much.

You know, I was very keen about the new home warranty program when it first came out because I'd campaigned for it for a long time, five or six years. What we were finding was that with the normal warranty period that was granted to single-family homes but in my case to condominium buildings or to multifamily buildings, to townhouse sorts of accommodation, or even to multifamily rental buildings, the warranty would run out before the problems were discovered because the problems were often internal and pretty severe.

We are still finding condos that have discovered that their balconies or their windows were leaking and that the water is

running internally through the sort of wooden skeleton of the complex, and it's rotting out floors and the coverings on the decks and the walkways. By the time you figure this all out, it's a mess, and the people are having to pay for an inspector to come out and go: yeah, it's a mess. Then you've got to have people come out and tell you how much money they think they're going to have to charge you in order to fix this.

Honestly, it was just to the point of absurdity. People had the single biggest purchase of their lives. They'd gone out and bought this condo. It's everything they had. They're maxed out, you know, doing their condo fees and their mortgage payment, and then they find out that there's going to have to be an additional assessment; in other words, an additional charge that they're going to have to pay because they are all going to have to come together as the owners of a building to help fix the building so they can keep living in it.

It'll be familiar to any of you that drive around in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre because those are the buildings that are sort of sheathed in these scaffoldings and the drop tarps while they tear all the balconies off or take all the windows out and put them all back in again. It is millions and millions of dollars. So the effect is that the assessment to those individuals was ranging from – I think the lowest one I ever heard was \$8,000. I heard \$30,000 a lot, and somebody got way up there to kind of \$70,000 or \$80,000. I can't imagine how you would manage to pay for that on top of your fees and your living expenses and your mortgage.

It was really important to me that we as leaders and legislators come up with a program that was going to be able to be used by groups like my condo owners that discovered the problems long after the one-year warranty. This New Home Buyer Protection Act really went a long way to satisfying that, and I was really happy to see it. Thank you very much.

There was a delay in putting it into place, which I dutifully groused about in trying to get the government to speed up on implementing it. I think it was a six-month delay in actually proclaiming the bill. But now it turns out that as they started to work through the regulations – for those of you following along at home, God bless you, but also remember that the act, the legislation, or the statute as it's called once it's been passed, is the bigger picture design of what's supposed to happen. The regulations are the nitty-gritty, the how of how it all happens.

Once they started to work through designing the regulations and hearing back from some of the people that were going to have to be implementing that, they started to discover that there were a few places that were just not really clear. For example, when does it start? "Well, when you've paid for it. No. Wait. When you move in. Well, wait. Not everybody gets to move in when they've paid for it, and not everybody has paid for it when they move in." That wasn't quite working, so they went: "You know what? We really do need a really firm, written-in-legislation deadline of when this program starts." Good. Okay. Fair enough.

Another thing that's in here is renaming it from I think a warranty period to a protection period. Okay. To a layperson like me that sounds like semantics. But "protection period": I got that. Okay. Fine. If that helps everybody, go for it.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tease just the tiniest little bit. As many times as I have said, "Don't take things out of the legislation and put it into regs," here we have them taking it out of regulations and putting it into legislation – so, tee-hee, sometimes it's a fun day – but, you know, done for a good reason. The sponsoring member, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, said in *Hansard* on page 330: "Adopts several rules already in place in the regulations. While these regulations are working well, adopting

them into the act provides a more permanent solution." Aren't those lovely words? So there you go. It can be done. I'll be sure to remember that the next time you decide to move it from legislation into regs. Sorry. That's a little bit of a sidebar, but, you know, I have to poke fun when I can.

We talked about the protection period, when it commences.

Now, there is kind of an odd thing in here, and I'm not quite sure why. Maybe when we get into committee, the minister could explain where this came from. It starts talking about a very funny section about apartment buildings and how it won't apply to an apartment building as long as the apartment owner doesn't sell anything. I'm thinking: what does this have to do with the price of tea in China? If the sponsoring minister would be so kind as to – here it is: "Exempt apartments must have a rental use designation registered on their land title." It will say "that the apartment building has no insurance." Does that mean that they're going to be able to qualify under this warranty or not qualify under this warranty – I'm sorry – protection plan? I just don't understand why you've got apartment buildings in here. It was meant to be for people that owned things. The expansion to one person who owns an apartment building and then having exceptions about it is striking me as a bit out of step with the rest of what the act is about, which is single-family homeowners and multi-unit homeowners, condo owners in other words.

3:00

I'm sorry. While I'm at it, Mr. Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs, if I could just remind you all that we are still waiting for legislation on life leases. There was a point where the previous Member for Little Bow was bringing forward a private member's bill, and that's got to be three or four years ago now. If I could just remind you that we are still waiting for that. Life lease accommodation continues to be built. It is completely without legislation, and it is sort of sitting out there in a nether land, and it's becoming increasingly difficult for people around how they file their taxes, for example, and some pretty critical things like that.

Just so that you all know what I'm talking about, in the same way that condominiums sit halfway in between single-family homes and apartments in that you own it and you own that little piece of land but you own things in common with other people because you're living in a multi-unit building – so that sets condos sort of in between single-family homes and apartment buildings – life leases sit sort of on the other side of apartment buildings. People are putting money forward, significant money, hundreds of thousands of dollars, to bring down the cost for the builder of the complex so that they're not paying borrowing costs. The builder can build bigger, nicer units, a nicer place, for less money, and the people that have kind of advanced this money to them can move in, have a bigger, nicer place. When they die or move out, they get their initial investment, no interest, back. In the meantime they've paid a sort of maintenance fee as they go along.

Lots of those people get in there, and they think they're condo owners. They think they have control over the colour of the carpet in the hallways and whether there's going to be a food prep area or not, and they don't because they're not condo owners. They don't own the whole complex, but they've contributed towards it. So you see how this starts to get – so, please, please, I'll put in another plea that you work on developing some legislation around that, because it really has been a very long time. You can call me tangent girl.

Back to Bill 6. You know, I've gone through all of the different sections. It's being described as sort of minor administration and technical, which is actually a pretty good term for it. It is things

like changing it to a protection period and identifying exactly when everything starts. There's rental use designation, which is the one I was questioning on. That's a new piece that's been added in. That's actually quite a big new piece. I talked about the start date for the warranty coverage. It's empowering the registrar to determine which buildings qualify as a new home under this, when a penalty can be appealed, and whether somebody has to pay it and then get it back and what the deal with that is.

So it's just a lot of little, small things that are needed to make this whole thing operate better. Since I was so darn keen on having it in the first place, there's nothing being done here that I disagree with. I really want this program to work. It's really important to my constituents in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre and, in fact, to everybody in Alberta who's buying a new home, whether it's a condo or single-family or semidetached. It's a lot – a lot – of money, your biggest expenditure in your life. For many people it could well be their primary home for most of their life. I mean, my dad is still living in the house that he built on my mother's design in 1955. He's still there. He will have lived in that house for the greatest part of his life, and I dearly hope that he dies in that house, which would just be really nice for him.

You know, considering that, I'm glad to see that work has continued on this bill and that people are paying attention to the minutiae, which I always appreciate. Good work. My thanks to the people in the department that worked on this. I really appreciate your effort, and I think you've done a nice job there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I urge everyone to vote in favour of second reading of Bill 6.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and if there are others, please let me know. Thank you.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise also to support this bill in principle. I won't speak for the entire caucus, but I think the majority supported the bill when it originally came forward. The whole idea of having liability insurance is a good thing. I don't think anyone's arguing that. But there have been some injustices as a result of the rapid pace of passing the bill, and I'm hoping the minister can correct it on the amending bill. I'm going to point it out.

In this bill here, the amending bill, particularly on page 8, part 6, that is dealing with section 4, it's good to see those changes that are now really detailing that a residential builder should ensure that the building or the structure is free from what defects. That's a good thing.

But where the injustice comes for the homeowner-builder, the one that qualifies for the exemption – and I'll put it into context. I had a chance to talk to some contractors who are in agreement with the bill. They pay a \$90 fee to register their properties. The contractor I spoke to pays roughly \$1,200 per \$500,000 home that he builds, and that's a rough figure. He thinks that's actually quite reasonable. That cost gets passed along in the sale of the home.

What I found out is that under the original bill section 5 just said that there will be a fee that will be set in regulation for the homeowner-builder, that will be exempt from the liability portion. Now, of course, we all know that if they sell that house before the 10 years are up, then they have to go get liability. So if they don't do that up front, they'll probably pay more for that liability four years, five years down the road if they want to sell. I still think that's a good idea. But where the real penalty is here is that if you are exempt, the fee to register your property for this registrar is set at \$750. What does that give you if you're exempt? You're more

than halfway there for the liability insurance in the first place. So in comparison to the contractor, who only pays \$90 to register, there's a great disparity and unfairness.

Now, speaking for those homeowner-builders, which I have a lot of in the rural area, they do not plan on selling their home. They plan on living on their family property for the rest of their lives. Yet they're paying a fee considerably more than anyone else just to register their property. That seems so unfair.

So in principle the bill itself, the original bill, I thought was good. It's why I supported it. I think we rushed it through. I don't know if we did a thorough consultation. I did hear a lot of feedback from contractors that didn't know about it. I understand that. I know that when I saw the amending bill come forward, I talked to some contractors. They had no idea that the changes were coming. But here we are dealing with the same situation. We are amending a bill that came through quite quickly.

Mr. Speaker, we need to correct the disparities and make sure the playing field is fair. That amendment to cap or to set a standard fee for registration, in my view, should be universal. To have a contractor pay \$90 to register properties but a homeowner pay \$750 to register a piece of property seems unjust to me. I think we can balance that out. I think it's reasonable and fair that if everyone had to pay \$90, that might be a little bit more palatable to the homeowner-builders.

3:10

Now where I stumbled upon this. Quite a reputable architect in my area, who I believe is building a home for his daughter, or it might be for himself, ran across this as they were subdividing property. It's the typical situation. His question was a question that I could not answer, which is: what does \$750 get me? The truth be known, it's nothing other than that it registers the property, that costs somebody else \$90.

I think if we could correct that – and there are places in this bill that an amendment could be brought forward to make sure the regulations are consistent. I notice there are a number of places, particularly in section 8 of the original bill, which is page 9 of this amending bill. We could direct the registrar fees to be a set fee, and then it's in legislation, or we could set it as equal. There are a number of ways the bill could be worded to make it fair. That's what we're looking for, just to make it fair.

Hopefully, the minister will take that under consideration, and we can have not just unanimous support for the bill but no questions remaining behind. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is now available. Is there anyone wishing to take advantage of that?

I see no one, so let's go on to Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Bilous: All right. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to second reading of Bill 6, New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2014. At the onset I do need to mention that what's unfortunate about this amendment act is that we shouldn't have to be here right now debating this. Had the government accepted many of the amendments that were proposed by the Alberta NDP on strengthening the act last year, the first time that this came to the House, we wouldn't be in here debating something that, like I said, should have been included in the act at the onset. It is worth noting that this legislation was rushed last year. I know that we were debating a couple of the readings quite late into the evening.

The greater frustration is that most of what the bill is amending and proposing to do – again, you know, the Alberta NDP put forward several amendments last year, and the PC Party voted all of them down. It seems a little foolish that we're back here a year later. I guess they finally maybe reread our amendments or took a year to understand them. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I want to say that at least now they are strengthening an act that actually was full of a few holes. I think it is important that the bill takes some positive steps towards addressing the issue of condo occupancy and common facilities in the buildings, which was an issue that we raised as well as the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Again, you know, a question that I would love to ask the minister is – I hope that he could answer; I appreciate that he wasn't the minister last year, when this act came through – why didn't we or could we not have addressed these issues last year, when the bill was initially tabled in the House, as we had tried to do?

This one amendment means that coverage will begin for condos only at the point when permission to occupy has been given and the first unit is occupied. The defining of common facilities, again, is a positive step in this bill. One of the major issues that comes with condo ownership, Mr. Speaker, is who's responsible for paying for things that are considered common facilities such as the building envelope or the load-bearing structures. These amendments allow for some clarity on those issues, which I think is positive.

Again, we were advocating – and we still are – for the length of coverage, increasing the time period of coverage. The greatest concern that the Alberta NDP raised when this bill first came to the floor last year was that the length of coverage included, in our opinion, is still not long enough to adequately protect our new home owners. Prior to the debate last year we had done some consultation with experts, who raised concerns about the two coverage periods, specifically the one-year coverage for defects and materials and labour and the five-year coverage for defects in the building envelope. Now, our position and what experts were telling us is that one year is very little time to determine if defects in material or labour are present, you know, sometimes taking into consideration that it takes homeowners several months to move into their new residence. Obviously, the clock is now playing against them.

Our proposal was to extend the minimum coverage for defects to at least two years, which, again, I don't think was asking too much. We're extending that coverage for an extra year, which gives new homeowners adequate time if there are defects in labour or materials. Now, this somewhat addresses the protection period's starting at an earlier date. Both time of purchase and time of occupancy could be included as the start date, which might give a little more elbow room for homeowners.

As well, as far as the consultation we did with experts on defects in the building envelope, they've stated to us, Mr. Speaker, that it could take as long as 10 years or even longer for defects in the building envelope to become apparent. So that's where our position came from, really, from industry saying to us, you know, that 10 years is an adequate coverage time.

I think that those two requests, or strengthening, are reasonable and, again, would mean that we don't need to come back to this bill a third time in another year from now when we learn that homeowners aren't getting adequate length of coverage from even these amendments.

At the moment, though, what we're proposing is that instead of having the option for homeowners to purchase additional coverage for the building envelope or other defects, which I'm sure the minister will talk about when we get into committee – again, our question is: why can't we just extend the mandatory coverage

period instead? It is interesting. If we're giving homeowners the option of purchasing additional coverage or extension, does that mean that we already know that the minimum period that's being covered in this bill is not long enough? I mean, wouldn't it make sense, if the purpose of this is really to protect homeowners, to just extend the length of protection?

Even though the amendments in this bill clarify the protection period or the exemption for properties that will be exclusively rented, there are still some issues that may arise out of this, Mr. Speaker. Properties that are built with the sole purpose of renting can be exempt from obtaining insurance prior to building. Now, this may leave those who are renting in trouble should any problems arise with the building. Though they will have to pay out of pocket for repairs, they still run the risks of having rents raised in order to recoup the costs incurred by the building owner due to costly repairs.

Mr. Speaker, we still want this legislation, obviously, to do what it's advertised to do, which is to protect homeowners. Conversely, this legislation should not in any way be a protective mechanism for incompetent home builders or companies that serve to benefit greatly through this legislation as warranty providers. During the debate on the original bill, I mean, we were endorsing the spirit of the legislation, and we need to make sure that it's strong enough to protect the interest of consumers and that time periods stipulated are in accordance with expert recommendations. Again, our data is backed up through experts in the field and through consultations that we've had with builders. My hope for this bill is that it will in fact strengthen the existing bill, ensuring that homeowners have more protection.

What's interesting is that the minimum-level warranty coverage in Alberta is \$265,000 on a new home. Now, while that number is slightly higher than what's covered in other jurisdictions, the average price of a home in Alberta in January of 2012 was \$342,000, including land costs. I've just heard recently that, again, in the housing market in Edmonton, I believe, we're 4 per cent over what the highest rates were in 2007. If I'm not mistaken, the average value or price of a home is now over \$400,000. You know, I guess, one thing that I would like to see in this bill – and, hopefully, the government is amicable to amendments when we get into committee – is bumping up that number again, especially in light of the fact that our housing values and costs are continuing to rise at an extremely rapid rate within our province here.

3:20

Let's see here. During the last round of debates on this bill we talked about the issue of ensuring that all buyers are protected and one of the problems that can arise from building inspections and the need for greater clarity in legislative power in this aspect. My colleague from Edmonton-Calder had talked about the fact that provincial inspectors were eliminated back in 1993, and that was a significant setback to the integrity of the building system. I think, you know, looking at addressing inspectors and inspections is another way to strengthen protection for homebuyers.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I just want to wrap up by saying that the Alberta NDP is going to be supporting these amendments, that strengthen the bill. However, it needs to be noted that this should have been done the first time through. We had amendments from the Alberta NDP and, I believe, from the other two opposition parties as well. Had the government slowed down the process of passing the legislation initially and looked at adopting the amendments, that actually were written in the best interests of homeowners, we wouldn't have to be here and wouldn't have to take the time to debate this bill and could be working on other pieces of legislation. I can say that I am

disappointed that the government did not accept our recommendations last year. I hope that they're willing to consider some of the amendments that are going to be put forward, if any, from the opposition side in this reading of the bill. The point, obviously, is: let's get it done, let's get it done right, and then we can move on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is now available.

I see no one. I have one person left on the list, and that is Calgary-Shaw. Please proceed.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to second reading of Bill 6 and will echo some of the comments made by previous members. The manner in which this government seems to be passing legislation right now is just a little surprising. It's clear that proper consultations were not done on this bill. It's the only plausible reason why we would find ourselves back here less than two years after this had already been passed with an amendment act to it. It speaks to, I guess, just the fly-by-night legislative process that seems to be happening with this government currently. It's very unfortunate that you can't do your work on the front end, and here we are again, fixing something that should have just been done right the first time.

It's clear that the stakeholders who were going to be impacted by the original act, the original bill, just were not properly consulted, and I would hope that this government takes this bill, this amendment act, as a bit of a lesson. They can use this to remind themselves of why it's important to get that work done before bringing an incomplete bill to the House.

Overall, I mean, the amendment act is solid. It's sound. There are a couple of concerns that we do have, that we're hearing around the whole program itself. I will address those, and perhaps the minister could comment, respond, and/or take some action on some of these areas.

One of the issues that we're having is that the owner-builders are required to get a warranty even if they are the contractor who would be providing remedial services should the home require warranty-covered repairs. We are in support of the owner-builder clause as it is now. I know the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre had some questions about the value-add for individuals, for owner-builders who are spending \$750, but we also understand that the reason for that is to level the playing field and ensure that all builders out there are reputable and doing good work and have product that is going to be sound. The question remains around warranty for contract and the owner-builder who is going to be doing the fixing themselves and how that whole piece fits together.

The second issue is around the warranty coverage that is being offered to owner-builders. We're under the impression that there are about five companies that do offer warranty coverage in the province. We're hearing that there are only two that will actually offer owner-builder warranties and that some of the time that's actually only one. If you could just look into the competitive process around those warranties for some of our owner-builders. They are concerned that if it is just something that starts to become monopolized if everyone gets out of the game, then that's just not a healthy system.

The third problem is that we're hearing that staff are severely overworked in trying to provide the administration of this program. They're doing a great job, but the comments that we've heard back in some of our consultations are that their concerns

weren't necessarily reaching the minister's office. Now, I know that we have a new minister on the file, so perhaps that will change, but their words were that they felt the minister is somewhat insulated about hearing some of the issues that they are having. Again, we're hoping that the new minister will ensure that that problem is taken care of.

The final issue is around the digital support for the program. It's suffering ongoing failure. We hear a number of stories of a number of residents across the province who are trying to access the system, and we have website crashes, insufficient materials online, and e-mail addresses that are nonresponsive or simply unavailable. It seems to be somewhat commonplace for this program. Again, I would just request that the minister consider and address some of these issues that the people who are trying to access the program and that are using the program are experiencing as we have heard here in the Official Opposition.

Overall, though, Mr. Speaker, the bill is good in principle. It would have been great to have a full and sufficient process for consultation prior to the initial bill being tabled rather than the sorely lacking process of passing legislation and experiencing crisis with implementation followed by an amending bill, but I will leave that as it is for now and move on.

I look forward to seeing this get past second reading, and we'll see how things go in committee. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Are there any other speakers?

If not, Minister of Municipal Affairs, would you like to close debate, then?

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be here to close debate on what I believe is a very important piece of legislation. Before I get started, I'd just like to take a moment to thank the Canadian Home Builders' Association, the insurance companies, the municipalities, and all of those others that came and worked with us and supported as we built the regulations to look at what some of the very, very specific issues are and helped us come up with some of the fixes. I'm very pleased to be here to say that some of these fixes should be in legislation, and they're going to be in legislation. That's why we're here today. I believe it's worth taking the time to be here today to do that. I'm proud to be here to do that.

I also want to thank the members for Edmonton-Centre – I think you had some great questions – Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and Calgary-Shaw. I will bring answers back to those questions at the start of Committee of the Whole and try to answer as many as I can. I look forward to the debate at that time.

With that, I would call the question on second reading.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that's the conclusion of business for today, and I would move that the House stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:30 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 28th Legislature - 2nd Session (2014)

Activity to April 10, 2014

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 199 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 200 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

1 Savings Management Act (\$) (Redford)

First Reading -- 4 (Mar. 3, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 47-50 (Mar. 4, 2014 eve.), 84-85 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft.), 146-54 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 184-87 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 217-18 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 226-28 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 231-34 (Mar. 12, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 1, 2014; SA 2014 cS-2.5]

2 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading -- 84 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 143 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve.), 154-56 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 187-88 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 218 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 234 (Mar. 12, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 13, 2014; SA 2014 c2]

3 Securities Amendment Act, 2014 (Horner)

First Reading -- 62 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 143-45 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 187 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 218 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 234 (Mar. 12, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2014 c3]

4 Estate Administration Act (Kubinec)

First Reading -- 62-63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 145-46 (Mar. 10, 2014 eve.), 184 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft.), 191-93 (Mar. 11, 2014 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 229 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 250 (Mar. 13, 2014 aft.), 330 (Mar. 20, 2014 aft., passed)

5 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading -- 119 (Mar. 10, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 174 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft.), 188-90 (Mar. 11, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 218-20 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft.), 228-29 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 230 (Mar. 12, 2014 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 13, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 13, 2014; SA 2014 c1]

6 New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2014 (Hughes)

First Reading -- 300 (Mar. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 330-31 (Mar. 20, 2014 aft.), 417-21 (Apr. 10, 2014 aft., passed)

7 Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading -- 417 (Apr. 10, 2014 aft., passed)

201 Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014 (Kubinec)

First Reading -- 63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 123-34 (Mar. 10, 2014 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship)

202 Independent Budget Officer Act (Forsyth)

First Reading -- 63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 264-79 (Mar. 17, 2014 aft., defeated on division)

203 Childhood Vision Assessment Act (Jablonski)

First Reading -- 249 (Mar. 13, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 352-61 (Apr. 7, 2014 aft., adjourned)

204 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (MLA Public Interest Fee Waiver) Amendment Act, 2014 (Barnes)

First Reading -- 263-64 (Mar. 17, 2014 aft., passed)

205 Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Distress and Neglect) Amendment Act, 2014 (Webber)

First Reading -- 417 (Apr. 10, 2014 aft., passed)

Table of Contents

Prayers	405
Introduction of Guests	405
Members' Statements	
Rwandan Genocide	406
Flood Recovery and Mitigation in High River	406
Project Brock	407
Successful Teams	407
Daycare	407
AISH Wait Times	416
Oral Question Period	
Regional Dialysis Service	408
Progressive Conservative Party Trust Account	408
Flood Advisory and Warning System	409
Health Care Performance Indicators	409
Student Gay-straight Alliance Requests	410
Carbon Emissions Reduction	411
Alberta Health Services Consulting Contracts	411
Strathcona Community Hospital	412
Traffic Court Reform Initiative	412, 413
Misericordia Community Hospital	413
Infrastructure Planning and Maintenance	414
Land Annexation Process	414
Life Skills Education and Training	415
Home Care	415
Statement by the Speaker	
Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day Program	416
Notices of Motions	416
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 7 Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2014	417
Bill 205 Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Distress and Neglect) Amendment Act, 2014	417
Tabling Returns and Reports	417
Orders of the Day	417
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 6 New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2014	417

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