



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Third Session

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Issue 17

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)
Vacant, Battle River-Wainwright
Vacant, Spruce Grove-St. Albert

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 70 Wildrose: 5 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Donald Scott	Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education
Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome back to the Assembly.

Let us pray. O gracious God and Great Creator, we pray for the future of this great province and for its great inhabitants, whom we are honoured to serve through our roles in this Assembly. May truth and wisdom, care and compassion guide us in our duties and deliberations. Amen.

Hon. members, please remain standing, if you would, for the singing of our national anthem, as led by Mr. Robert Clark.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, may I ask you to remain standing.

As is our custom on our first day back, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

Mr. James E. "Bud" Miller March 31, 1923, to January 23, 2015

The Speaker: Today we pay tribute to Mr. James Edgar "Bud" Miller, who was born on March 31, 1923, and passed away on January 23, 2015. Mr. Miller served the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Member for Lloydminster for four consecutive terms from 1971 through 1986. He was born and raised in Kitscoty, Alberta. In addition to being a farmer and rancher, Mr. Miller also served as a sergeant in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War.

He was first elected to our Legislative Assembly in 1971, and from 1979 until 1982 Mr. Miller served as the associate minister of public lands and wildlife. During his 15 years of service he also served on 10 select standing committees and was deputy chair of three search committees. Shortly after his retirement the Bud Miller all seasons park in Lloydminster was named in his honour in June 1986. His ongoing involvement in the development of our province continued long after his tenure as an MLA and included his participation in major initiatives such as being the chair of the biprovincial upgrader from 1988 to 1995.

In a moment of silent prayer I would ask you to remember Mr. Bud Miller as you may have known him, and I would ask that you add to your prayers Mrs. Margaret Miller, Bud's beloved wife, who passed away just four weeks after Bud, on February 19. O Lord, grant unto him eternal rest, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, following up on our prayer, it is with great admiration and respect that we pay gratitude to members of the families who shared the burden of public office and of public service. Today I would like to welcome some special family members of the Miller clan who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please allow me to introduce all of them. I would ask that they rise as I call their names, and then we can applaud them with our thanks and gratitude after they have all been introduced: Sandra Erickson, daughter of Bud Miller; Jody Erickson, granddaughter of Bud Miller; Joe Miller, son of Bud Miller; Elizabeth Miller, daughter-in-law of Bud Miller; Ian Miller, grandson of Bud Miller; Dan Miller, son of Bud Miller; Kathy Miller, daughter-in-law of Bud Miller. Honourable family members, please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you at this very difficult time. Thank you so much. [applause]

The hon. Minister of Energy, followed by the Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Joe Pastion, who is the chief of the Dene Tha' First Nation in the Peace River constituency in northern Alberta. I'm very, very pleased to have the chief here. I've had a chance to meet with him and discuss a couple of issues of common mutual interest. He's here with other Treaty 8 representatives to further the interests of Treaty 8 and their own individual communities. He's seated in your gallery, in the Speaker's gallery. He's risen. I'd ask that we all give him the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two special visitors who are former MLAs and belong to the Alberta Association of Former MLAs, also known as the AAFMLA. They are Karen Leibovici, the president of the AAFMLA – Karen was the MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark from 1993 to 2001 – and Mr. Julius Yankowsky, secretary of the AAFMLA. Julius was the MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont from 1993 to '97 and MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview from 1997 to 2004. They are seated in your gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're going to begin with school groups. Could I ask you to please keep your introductions as brief as possible because we have so many introductions to do today and so much business to carry on with.

Let us begin with the Minister of Seniors, followed by Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a group of young students from H.A. Kostash school in Smoky Lake. Of course, Smoky Lake, in my constituency, is the pumpkin capital of Alberta and one of my favourite spots in the constituency. These students – I think there are 29 visitors – are joined by their teacher, Tara Harris, and parent helpers Shylha Brodyk, Mrs. Deloyce Kusick, and Mr. Billy McMullen. If I could ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Young: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly my honour to stand and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 37 students from the Malmo elementary school. They are escorted today by their teacher, Mrs. Theresa Bonar, and parent helpers Brandon Bosma and Howaida Hassan. I ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 30 students from York elementary school, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Manning. They are accompanied by their teacher, Ms Dora Strasdin, and two parent helpers, Mrs. Lemmon and Mrs. Fenniak. These bright students are the future leaders of our province and country. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 26 of the brightest young people from my diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. One of the best parts of this job is to meet and greet the future of Alberta, and the future is bright, sir, with these students from Mother Teresa Halkirk Catholic school. They are accompanied today by Alyn, Michael, and Crystal. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 20 visitors from McArthur elementary school along with their teacher and a chaperone, Ms Ginette Larocque and Ms Patsy Best. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of everyone here at the Legislature.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there other school groups?

If not, we'll move on to other important guests. Please remember that I will give you a signal if I see that you're going on a little too long with the introductions.

Let's start with the Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations.

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my first introduction it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House some individuals who have contributed much to building vibrant and inclusive communities in our province. I have Mr. Allan Kwan, a former GOA executive and now an active volunteer with ASSIST Community Services Centre, providing services to newcomers, and a member of seniors and long-term facilities; Ms Sandy Pon, a successful realtor, business owner, and now very involved with the United Way and the Edmonton Realtors' Charitable Foundation. Also with us today is Ms Mary Fung, a former teacher who now volunteers with many organizations, including the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating

Council and Age Friendly Edmonton for Edmonton's Chinatown. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they please rise and receive the very warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. associate minister, you have a second introduction?

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you. For my second introduction I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you again three individuals who not only embody Alberta's international spirit but through their activities and actions have helped strengthen our international relations in Asia, an important region for the future of this province: Mr. Larry Lang has as a former director for economic development and tourism worked to enhance our trade ties in Asia and helped negotiate the establishment of the China-Alberta petroleum training centre in Beijing in 1985. It's been 30 years since Mr. Lang sat in this gallery. Next is Ms Eloisa Lau, who's been incredibly active in the Filipino community, has organized events and fundraisers when tragic disasters hit the Philippines. She has worked with the temporary foreign workers in our province and helped to solve many of their problems. Also joining us today is Mr. Gongjie Ma, an international student who graduated from Zhejiang University, a very important partner to the U of A. He also obtained his MBA from the U of A this last summer. Gongjie has been very active also with the Chinese international student community. They are now seated in the members' gallery. I ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister of Human Services, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives from the Alberta College of Social Workers, a number of whom work with the government of Alberta. Last week was Alberta Social Work Week. Alberta has over 7,000 registered social workers, and I'm proud to share that over 3,000 are employed by the government of Alberta. Every day thousands of Albertans benefit from their support. They demonstrate dedication and professionalism as they work to improve the health and well-being of all Albertans. I would ask the following individuals to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. First of all, Vince Pasqua and Colleen Geake are representing Human Services staff today. They are joined by Lori Sigurdson and Lynn King, representatives of the Alberta College of Social Workers, plus two social work students, Beverley King and David Von Haller. Please join me in welcoming these guests.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some very important team members. Nathan Steinke and Maureen Gough have recently joined team Wildrose and have been working hard to help prepare us for session. They are in the gallery here today. I know all members appreciate having great staff, so I'd invite them to stand and invite all members to welcome Maureen and Nathan with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two hard-working Albertans who work to support communities all across the province through their positions with the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies. Ag societies are present in many, many communities across the province and provide great services and facilities. With us today are Doug Kryzanowski, who is the president, and the chief executive officer, Tim Carson. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by Lethbridge-West.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you to this Assembly my guests, Guy Smith and Tyler Bedford, both representing the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. AUPE represents 80,000 working Albertans who are an essential part of this economy. Tyler has worked in communications with AUPE for almost five years and is a former staffer at the Legislature, and Guy has worked for AUPE for over 25 years and is the current president. He spent decades fighting against government cutbacks to protect quality of care for all Albertans. His exemplary service to this province stands as a shining example of what can be achieved through political participation. I want to recognize these fine individuals for their hard work in this time of uncertainty, so in recognition of this I would ask Guy and Tyler to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Gord Tait. Mr. Tait is a long-time member of Lethbridge, he's a chartered accountant, and he's one of the founding partners with Meyers Norris Penny, which was a small local firm that is now one of the fastest growing firms in Canada. I would ask Gord to please rise and receive the warm greeting of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we won't be able to start question period right now, but I would beg your indulgence to let us carry on and complete the introductions and then move on to Ministerial Statements with responses and then go to OQP. I'm assuming that will be okay with everyone. Yes? Thank you so much.

Let us move on, then, to the hon. Minister of Infrastructure, followed by Sherwood Park.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you three individuals: Mr. Mike Brar, Kuldip Gil, and Kuldeep Sidhu. Mr. Brar is no stranger to this House, having previously worked for and closely advising then Premier Don Getty as a special adviser. Up till today he continues to be a tireless advocate for the community. He works very closely with many community organizations, and individuals like yourself and the hon. Premier would count Mr. Brar as a close friend. I'd ask all three to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two visitors from

my constituency of Sherwood Park. Dr. Herb Belcourt is a Métis, aboriginal, and First Nation champion, author, member of the Order of Canada, recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal, and a long-time Progressive Conservative supporter, dating back to the '70s.

I also have with us Mr. Joe Lipka, a dedicated director of the Sherwood Park Progressive Conservative Association and a renowned champion old-time fiddle player. Most of all, he served our community and our country as an RCMP officer for many years.

These esteemed gentlemen are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to introduce a good friend of mine and a guest who is no stranger to this House as well. Mr. Tom Olsen is here today. Through you and to the rest of the members of the House I would like him to rise and receive the honourable welcome.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

Are there any others? One from the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce Jerry Aulenbach, a good friend of mine and a constituent and also on the Twitter feed ZoomJer. If Mr. Aulenbach could please stand up and give the Assembly a wave.

Thank you.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Mr. Dirks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour on this first day of the spring session to speak to the Assembly on a topic of profound importance for Alberta students and many others across our province. I am referring to Bill 10 and the matter of legislation regarding student gay-straight alliances in Alberta schools. This matter was first brought before us by the Member for Edmonton-Centre through her private member's bill early in the fall, and I want to acknowledge her efforts this afternoon. Your efforts have not gone in vain.

Late last year the Premier wisely put the government's Bill 10 on pause in order to permit a time of extended conversation with Albertans on this important matter. As Minister of Education I have felt a particular obligation to hear from as many Albertans as I could about this issue and have therefore spent much of the last three months speaking with a wide variety of teachers, parents, members of the LGBTQ community, religious leaders, trustees, principals, counsellors, legal experts, and a broad assortment of community leaders.

Most importantly, in my travels around the province I talked with numerous students who are directly affected by gay-straight alliances. If you could have joined me in these conversations, Mr. Speaker, you would have heard students talking about the taunting, mocking, and bullying they have suffered because of their sexual orientation. You would hear them speak of parents who don't understand them, of online bullying, and of suicidal thoughts. They told me, sometimes in tears, how alone and helpless they have felt when caring friends and sympathetic teachers are not around them. But when I asked them, "Tell me about your GSAs," their faces

brightened, and with animated voices they would tell me about their GSA, how it helped them feel safe at school and how they now felt valued, respected, and welcomed.

Mr. Speaker, even if you talked to no one else on this matter except students, you would quickly come to the conclusion that GSAs are all about providing groups of gay and straight students with safe, caring, respectful, welcoming, and inclusive spaces at our schools. But, as I mentioned earlier, I also spoke to a broad spectrum of adults – teachers, parents, religious leaders, community leaders, trustees, principals, and others – who wanted to talk about the bill and tell us what they thought we as a government should do about GSAs. Not surprisingly, I received a wide range of opinions, but there is no question that the vast majority of Albertans with whom I interacted spoke in favour of ensuring that kids who want to form a GSA club in their school should be able to do so.

It was my privilege along with other members of this Assembly to attend at a public forum sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Civil Liberties Association, where I heard compelling presentations by mothers of gay students, professors, straight students supporting their LGBTQ friends, postsecondary students, and experts in civil rights. Their messages were clear. Schools should allow GSAs on school property, just like every other kind of voluntary student friendship club at school is permitted to operate.

Mr. Speaker, GSAs in schools do not segregate students. They are voluntary, open, and inclusive of anyone who wants to join, and they are not designed to be exclusive to LGBTQ students. As well, it should be noted that the freedom for religious, faith-based schools to engage in religious instruction is in no way limited by and does not conflict with the existence of a GSA at a school.

The conversation on Bill 10 and GSAs with Albertans these past three months has been of vital importance, and I am thankful to every Albertan who took the time to express their perspective to their Member of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that there is only one way forward. I am pleased therefore to table today a draft amendment to Bill 10 that stresses the importance of ensuring that every student in Alberta that feels the need for a GSA can have one. This draft amendment calls for students to be able to establish gay-straight alliances in any Alberta school, for these GSAs to be allowed to meet on school property, and for students to be able to call their club a GSA, a QSA, or any other name of their choosing.

Mr. Speaker, the draft language reads that

if one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall . . . permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school.

For the purposes of the draft amendment

an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

The amendment also clearly states that the principal of the school shall

designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation . . . or to assist in organizing the activity.

If no staff member is available to serve as the staff liaison, the principal shall immediately inform the board and the minister, and if so informed

the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.

The draft amendment also states that

the students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”, after consulting with the principal.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, ensuring our children, who are the future of this province, have a safe, caring, respectful, inclusive school environment free from bullying is of paramount importance. Because this is such an important matter, it is my hope that all members of the Assembly will support Bill 10 moving back to Committee of the Whole so that this important draft amendment, that ensures every Alberta student who wants a GSA will be able to have one, can be dealt with in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, I have copies of these draft amendments to be passed out to each member. I thank you for the opportunity to bring this matter to members and urge them to take this matter up forthwith.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to get up and respond to the minister’s statement. Let me start off by saying that I think credit has to go where credit is due, and that credit doesn’t go to the government, but it goes to the Member for Edmonton-Centre, quite frankly, because she’s the one that brought the legislation forward under Bill 202, which actually got this conversation started.

I want to start by saying that in 22 years in the Legislature I have never encountered a situation like we’re seeing today. The tradition in this Legislature, as far as I can find – and we’ve checked – is that if a minister is making a ministerial statement, they share the ministerial statement with the opposition so that we have time to respond. That hasn’t happened today.

2:00

What I find extraordinary is that I had a call from two of the ministers at about 11:30 this morning and asked with 10 minutes’ notice to meet with them to tell me what they were doing. At that particular time I said, “Can we see a copy of the ministerial statement that the minister is preparing?” “Nope. Can’t do that.” Not only do we see a statement, but we’ve also seen amendments tabled in the Legislature without giving us proper time to respond.

I want to say, though – and there’s no question – that I’m on the record that I support GSAs, and I did when I spoke on Bill 10 about how I feel about GSAs in schools. I explained to people in the Legislature, when we were debating Bill 10, that I have a gay family member and am very proud of that and have been around gay, straight people for as long as I can remember. I think that where we’re going on this is the right thing to do. If a gay student wants to start a club in a school, it’s a club, and they should be allowed to do it.

So we are looking forward to seeing the amendments that the minister is going to propose. I don’t think we should be playing politics when we’re talking about children, quite frankly. To me, it’s about providing a safe environment for our children, and it’s apparent to me that the government is trying to get its act together, if I can say that. We will be speaking when we deal with the amendments on Bill 10.

Again, I truly want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre for all the work that she's done. I think it's something that she will be able to go down in history as saying she brought to this province, and I think it should be a very proud moment in her life.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask unanimous consent of the Assembly to allow myself and the leader of the New Democrat Party to respond to the ministerial statement.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You've heard the request for unanimous consent, and I'm going to add to that a request from the independent Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to also add some brief comments. If anyone is opposed to giving unanimous consent to any of these three members who wish to speak, please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, it's hard to contain my joy, but always being a stickler for process, I will just ever so gently chastise the minister for being unable to provide the ministerial statement in advance as is the customary courtesy. I understand why it didn't happen. Nonetheless, I'll just give a little gentle reminder there.

Today's announcement is a victory for safety and inclusivity and proof of the value of an effective opposition, an effective Liberal opposition. Last April with Motion 503 Alberta Liberals began the fight for gay-straight alliances in any school where they are needed, and that was brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo. When that motion was voted down, it prompted a backlash that I don't think anyone expected. They underestimated the progressiveness and inclusive values that Martha's and Henry's children hold dear.

We understand these values because they are our values, progressive values, so we brought forward Bill 202, the most comprehensive bill to protect the LBTTQ community that this province has ever seen. While cynical political tactics were used to kill Bill 202 before it could ever be debated, we again saw an inspiring backlash at the alternative Bill 10. Together this inclusive, progressive generation of Albertans, Martha's and Henry's kids, has ensured that schools provide safe spaces for vulnerable children in this province.

Thank you to every Albertan that refused to tolerate discrimination in this province. Your voice mattered.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. leader of Her Majesty's fourth party.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do plan to acknowledge my colleague from Edmonton-Centre, but let me just say that making me get up to speak right after she gets teary is not fair.

Anyway, you know, all students can now claim their right to start a GSA, and they can now start the work of building inclusive schools in communities across this province. Gender identity and gender expression will be added to the Bill of Rights, and the offensive section, 11.1, in our human rights code is being removed.

All of this is a long-overdue step in the right direction, Mr. Speaker, but it's important to understand that it didn't come without a fight. In 1998 the Supreme Court of Canada told all provinces that protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation had to be included in all human rights codes, but for over a decade this PC government and only this PC government in this province dragged its feet, refusing to fix our code. Even when they did, they gave with one hand and took away with another.

In 2009 I fought passionately against the decision to amend our human rights code so that teachers could be disciplined for talking about issues of equality and sexual orientation. Then last spring the issue of gay-straight alliances made its way into this Legislature, and the vast majority of government members twice voted down proposals that would have ensured that the best tools for protecting kids from bullying were a matter of right. Then even last fall our caucus proposed to include gender identity in Alberta's Bill of Rights, and it, too, was rejected. But – there is a but; don't worry – two and half months later it appears that we may be on the verge of fixing the unfortunate historical record of this government. Most importantly, we will provide real and meaningful support to members of the LGBTQ community in their schools and in their families, and that is the greatest outcome of the work that we will do on this bill.

I'd like to offer my thanks and congratulations to the many people who have been front and centre in these debates. I'd like to thank the Edmonton Youth Council, who successfully took a resolution to the Edmonton city council in support of GSAs. I'd like to note the Edmonton public school board and its former chair, Sarah Hoffman, who led the EPSB to developing the most inclusive and welcoming LGBTQ school policy in western Canada several years ago. I'd like to thank the many activists who never gave up pushing on this important issue over the last few months and over the last many years. I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues from Edmonton-Centre and from Calgary-Buffalo for using their rights as private members to set this debate in motion in this House.

The sad truth is that the PCs had to be dragged across the finish line on this one. That being said, they are here now, so I'd like to offer them our sincere welcome to this side of the line and congratulate you. This is a sound decision. It will help many Albertans, and it will represent a good step forward in the ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion for all communities across our province.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills did state a point of order around 2 p.m., I believe. I did not hear it, but the clerks at the table did, so we'll recognize that in a moment.

My apologies to you, hon. member, for not having heard you.

Let's now hear, however, from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While there are a lot of accolades and thank yous and credit for what is happening here and certainly the Member for Edmonton-Centre deserves a tremendous amount of credit, as do other members in this House, I would also like to give credit to the Member for Calgary-North West for putting out a lot of advocacy on this very issue. I want to acknowledge the fact that the Premier did come around at some point, and now we have the changes that are coming forth to address this issue.

It's interesting to note that this is the 50th anniversary week of something called Bloody Sunday, which, as some of you people who are old enough might remember, was a huge civil rights moment. I liken the issue that we dealt with in Bill 10 and Bill 202 to a civil rights moment. I did that in debate, and I still believe that in my heart.

2:10

The idea of equal rights is always a battle against ignorance. The battle against ignorance is never-ending. This bill is a battle against ignorance. It does more than just provide equal rights. It does something that we need to take credit for; maybe we stumbled on

the way to get credit for it. It actually reduces bullying, and it saves lives. The data is there to prove that it reduces teenage suicides. That is something that I am in favour of.

I want to thank the minister, and I want to thank the various members for standing up, for making this fight, and for getting the job done. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

The hon. member who is the Official Opposition House Leader wishes to raise a point of order.

Point of Order

Ministerial Statements

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very brief. I just rise according to Standing Order 23(e), which states that a member can be called to order when he "anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." I would just make the observation, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Education minister reading an amendment before this House before it's been submitted into this Legislature is unheard of. I haven't heard that before. I think that clearly one can indicate the substance of such an amendment, but in terms of reading in the amendment verbatim before it's been properly submitted in this Legislature, it's contrary to good parliamentary procedure. It seems like a minor point, but there has been a steady deterioration in protocol here, so I would just ask that the Speaker consider that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that the point of order from the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills is more of a point of clarification. In his own submission he did not indicate any rule that was extensively broken. I don't believe there has been any rule broken by the Minister of Education or anybody else, and I would invite your comments.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Government House Leader is quite correct, and so, too, in part at least, is the hon. Opposition House Leader. No rule has in fact been broken. However, there is a spot in the agenda where tablings normally occur.

This was a very unique situation, too, however, because traditionally ministerial statements sort of run in that four- or five-minute range. Today it went, I think, a little bit over six, which is allowed because there's no rule about the length of ministerial statements either. There is a rule, so to speak, with regard to the length of time opposition members or independent members have to respond.

However, in this case I have sent a note already to the Minister of Education, so you might say that through words on paper we have chatted about what just occurred.

While I'm up, I might also just ask the members of Executive Council that any time you have a ministerial statement, it is the courtesy to usually provide a copy of that in advance to opposition members. In this instance my understanding is that the subject of the minister's statement was at least provided, so that was found to be helpful, but for whatever reasons in this case the entire speech was not. I'll leave that to House leaders and to individual ministers to determine how they wish to proceed in the future.

Therefore, there is no specific point of order because no particular rule has been broken; however, I believe the record will clarify what the intent should be going forward.

That being said, let us now move on to the next item of business, Madam Clerk.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Let us begin with the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Fiscal Responsibility

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] Small but mighty.

Last week the Premier excused his government for the fiscal mess the province now sees itself in. When asked who is at fault, he told Albertans to look in the mirror. Now, if I were to hold up a mirror where I stand today, I'd see a principled opposition holding this government accountable for waste, entitlement, and bad management. If the Premier were to hold up a mirror right now, he'd see behind him the people directly responsible for the mess, his PC government. Will the Premier stand up, acknowledge what he sees in the mirror, and apologize to Albertans for blaming them for the mess his government created?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would similarly extend the courtesy of welcoming the Leader of the Opposition back to the Legislative Assembly for what, I think, has been a historic day in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I take responsibility for what I say, whether it is in the media or whether it is in this Chamber. As the hon. member knows, as members of her party know, as former members of her party know, I have been the harshest critic of former governments, and that is, in fact, why I'm here in this position. I intend to continue to serve Albertans, and I intend to continue to take responsibility for what I say.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: First the Premier blames Albertans for the provincial fiscal woes because it couldn't possibly be a series of bad decisions by a series of bad PC governments; now his ego won't allow him to apologize for insulting the very Albertans who pay for the most expensive Premier's office in the country, the most expensive MLAs in the country, and the most expensive government in the country. Mr. Premier, a little humility goes a long way. The former Premier had to learn that lesson the hard way. I'll ask you again. Will you apologize for the mess that you have incurred?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I take responsibility for what I have said. I will always take responsibility for what I have said. But the real issue is: what does the leader of the Wildrose Party have to say about the important issues that face Albertans today? What does she have to say about the fiscal issues that the government deals with on behalf of all Albertans? What indeed does she have to say in truth about the amendments to Bill 10 that have been put forward in this House today? It's about being accountable on the significant issues that we face as Albertans, and I look forward to hearing what the hon. member believes and is prepared to put forward.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, when Albertans hear about the sky palace, outrageous severances for health care executives, and sole-source contracts to friends of the PC government, they rightfully get upset. Albertans already contribute more tax per capita than anywhere else in the country. Now the Premier says that all of that waste is the fault of Albertans and that now Albertans are going to have to pay. Premier, Albertans don't deserve to be made the

scapegoats for the failing of your government, whether it's the past or the present. Just how much are you going to make Albertans pay for the mistakes of your government?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that shortly after becoming the Premier of the province, together with the Minister of Finance we eliminated the possibility of sole-source contracts. It was one of the matters which I was a harsh critic of relative to the former government, which I spoke up about, and which I changed when I became the Premier. That's indicative of the sort of changes that we are making as a government.

We face challenging financial circumstances. Alberta is tough. It is resilient. We will get through this. We'll get through this together. But I look forward to hearing from the opposition the specific ideas that they have about how we can deal with maintaining core, quality front-line services and at the same time manage our fiscal situation responsibly.

The Speaker: Second main set of questions. The Official Opposition leader.

Mrs. Forsyth: Premier, that sole-source contracting that you're talking about: half of your front bench allowed them.

Government Policies

Mrs. Forsyth: In a radio interview the Premier said that he's fully committed to keeping every promise he made in the PC leadership race. In the summer he promised no tax increases. Since then he's talked about every kind of tax he can think of: a sugar tax, a higher gas tax, higher income tax, sales tax, health tax, more sin tax, and higher user fees for just about everything. It's hurting the economy, Premier, and it's the latest example of the Premier pinning the blame on Albertans. Premier, there's still a chance you can keep . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Premier to respond.

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've never at any time suggested that Albertans are responsible for a collapse in oil prices that has resulted in a \$7 billion hole in the provincial government's revenue base. The real question is what to do about it. [interjection] If I might continue, the real question is what to do about it in a measured, balanced way. The Minister of Finance will be introducing to this Legislative Assembly a budget that is more than just a budget; it will be a fiscal plan for the next 10 years for how we will manage this circumstance. The real question for the opposition is: what do they intend to do about it? How do they intend to proceed? What do they have to say?

The Speaker: Thank you.

2:20

Mrs. Forsyth: Premier, you can't call an election on the price of oil and gas. Do you know how many elections you'll be in?

It's no wonder Albertans don't trust this government. It's obvious the Premier's tax talk is hurting economic investment. In October he said that it's time to wind down the government's \$2 billion commitment to carbon capture, but two weeks ago he expanded the program to five years. We estimate that ending this type of corporate handouts will save over a billion dollars in the next year alone. Why is the Premier insisting on spending billions of dollars in corporate handouts while threatening job-killing tax hikes on Albertans?

Mr. Prentice: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance will put forward a very detailed, comprehensive fiscal plan for how,

in a measured and balanced way, we will deal with the revenue shortfall that the government faces, how we will maintain quality services. Front-line services – health care, education, senior citizen care, and other front-line services – are extremely important to Albertans. How we maintain those services in the circumstances which we're in will require careful thought. It will require balance. I hope that the member opposite and her party have some concrete, specific ideas other than slashing and burning their way through the government.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Premier, I've already given you one idea. Stay tuned for the rest.

It's no secret Albertans are heading towards a very expensive, unnecessary, and, quite frankly, illegal election, and while the Premier had better be careful about what he wishes for, it's just another example of a broken promise he made to Albertans. The legislation is designed to be a contract between Albertans and the government. Premier, you are breaking this contract by threatening to call an election. Premier, are you going to honour that contract you have with Albertans? If not, will you tell Albertans today when you're going to call the election?

Mr. Prentice: Well, the hon. member knows full well that the legislation in question allows the Lieutenant Governor to call an election at another date, and, Mr. Speaker, in light of the financial circumstances that this province is in, circumstances that I think are without parallel, really in a generation, in terms of a precipitous collapse of our revenue by \$7 billion, a \$7 billion shortfall this year, \$6 billion in the year after that, a structural deficit thereafter if we do nothing – these are significant circumstances – Albertans need to have their say. No decisions have been made relative to elections, but we will press on and table a fiscal plan in this Chamber.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The third and final set of questions. The Official Opposition leader.

School Construction

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, this PC government went around the province in 2012 promising 120 school projects to be built before the next election. Well, yesterday we find out that only one has been built. Construction has literally been slower than a snail's pace. The Premier seems intent on pinning the blame on Albertans who expect the kids aren't packed in the classrooms like sardines. So I'll ask the Premier: how do you think Albertans can expect these schools to be built on time with the dismal PC record of keeping promises?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, there's been no more outspoken advocate about the need to catch up on our capital construction for schools than myself, and I stand by that. The schools in question – the hon. member should be frank with Albertans. It takes three and a half years to construct a school. That's a minimum in terms of the time that it takes. The schools that were committed to in 2011, some 35 schools, 30 of those schools are in fact completed. The schools that were announced in 2013, the 120 schools: 38 are under construction, 54 are in the design phase, and frankly another 26 are in the tender process. This is a process of a government building schools in a proper way, in a methodical way, in the best way possible, on time, and on budget.

Mrs. Forsyth: The Premier can try and run from his government's own record, but he can't hide. In October the Premier called the state of school construction the most expansive commitment we've ever seen in Alberta's history. But that was when the Premier was

buying his Education minister a seat, and this is now. It's been six months since he announced 77 new schools, and – guess what? – not a single shovel is in the ground on any of these projects. It's this kind of electioneering and broken promises that Albertans are sick of. Premier, when are you going to look in the mirror, clean up the mess, and admit you won't keep your promises that you made to Albertans?

The Speaker: Thank you.

A point of order from the Government House Leader has been noted at 2:26.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Bullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has indicated, of the phase 1 schools 30 are done. Two additional schools have students in the schools today. A further two are going to be ready in a very short period of time. Of the phase 2 schools 38 are in construction today, 54 are in design, 26 are in the tender process, and of the phase 3 schools that were announced last October, 12 of those schools have been expedited to have a target completion date of 2016.

Mrs. Forsyth: Now, Mr. Speaker, here is where the government aren't talking to each other. I'm going to try and put some facts out, Premier and Infrastructure minister. The Infrastructure minister says that it takes 12 to 18 months to build a new school. The Premier says three years. Wonder why people don't trust you? Six months since you promised 77 new schools, 60 of them are still in the planning phase. Zero are in construction. Excuse Albertans for their collective cynicism, but the stockpile of new school promises is beginning to rot. To the Premier: when are you going to stop announcing schools, reannouncing them, announcing them, and reannouncing them again?

Mr. Bullar: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, my comments have been very clear on this matter. To construct an elementary school, it takes between 12 to 16 or 18 months, and that is just the construction phase. That does not take into account the planning that happens with community groups, the design that has to take place on a specific site, testing the specific site conditions, and let's not forget our municipal partners that we have to get permitting from. That can take six months, eight months, 10 months, or even 12 months. The total process: about three to three and a half years.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Government Policies

(continued)

Dr. Swann: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's good to be back in the House. When the Premier looks in the mirror and sees a reflection of where the PC government has been over the last 25 years, he must see an awful sight indeed. The PCs have spent all the oil wealth in a generation. They're taking us into debt, unable to build schools our kids need or address poverty or provide good care to the sick and elderly. As a result of your negligent fiscal structure this generation will not have the same opportunities to be healthy or succeed as the previous. What is the Premier going to do to ensure that Martha's and Henry's kids are not left sweeping up broken dreams after the mirror shatters?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I rise, I would just like to add my voice to congratulate and on behalf of the province and all

Albertans thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre for her leadership on Bill 10 and Bill 202.

I would be more encouraged if the Member for Calgary-Mountain View would go back to gentle reminders, to use that phrase from the member. Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, we are attentive to our children. We are attentive to future Albertan children, who will grow up to be the stewards of this province. We are intent that they do not inherit broken dreams but that they inherit a province that is fiscally sound, that has excellent front-line . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, for not being gentle when we're cutting 2,500 teachers from Alberta's schools. This is a failure to take care of our most cherished promise. Overcrowded classrooms, the lack of any commitment to full-day kindergarten: can you not see that Martha's and Henry's kids, our future, are not getting the education they deserve, and what are you going to do about it?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, I take great exception and umbrage to the assumptions of the member opposite. They are entirely inaccurate. We have no intention of cutting 2,500 teachers. That's an absurd thought. I'm here to advocate for education, not to cut 2,500 teachers, and the member opposite knows that. We're doing everything we can to ensure that we have a productive, progressive, healthy education system going forward, that will continue to provide the best in educational outcomes for our children.

Dr. Swann: Pray tell: how is \$80 million cut out of Calgary going to increase the teacher-to-child ratio? That doesn't compute. To quote Michael Jackson, "I'm starting with the man in the mirror. I'm asking him to change his ways." We need revenue. Despite floating a series of trial balloons, the Premier has eliminated most of the ways to raise stable, predictable funding. To the Premier: if all Albertans are in this together and we should all be looking in the mirror, when are you going to ask the wealthy individuals in your collective and corporations to pay their share? Progressive tax.

2:30

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear in our discussions across the province that we're going to look after the low-income families. We're going to look after the most vulnerable. I'd ask the member just to stay tuned for the budget coming on March 26.

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

Ms. Notley: Mr. Speaker, when I look in the mirror, I don't see someone who doled out reckless tax cuts to Alberta's most wealthy while allowing schools to crumble and ER wait times to skyrocket. For months Albertans have been wondering how we got into this jam, and last week the Premier gave them an answer. He thinks that Albertans looking for who's to blame need to look in the mirror. To the Premier: will he finally apologize, not take responsibility but apologize, for last week's remarks and acknowledge that it is his party's failures that have left Alberta so financially vulnerable?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, at the risk of reiterating: I take responsibility for what I have said. I have always taken responsibility for my comments, whether they're in the media or in this Chamber or elsewhere. The hon. member knows that I have been amongst the harshest critics in terms of how the public finances of this province have been administered. That is why I ran for the leadership of my party, that is why I'm in this Chamber, and that is why I intend on doing the right thing by Albertans.

Ms Notley: Well, I guess that's a no.

Last week the Premier said, quote, we've had the best of everything in this province. But, Mr. Speaker, people in this province are crammed into crumbling hospitals. Students are paying more. Kids are busing hours a day to go to school in makeshift, overcrowded classrooms. To the Premier: if this is the state of our service after we've had the, quote, best of everything, why won't the Premier admit that the cuts he's threatening to front-line services will make things much worse, not better?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, to correct the leader of the fourth party, I have not suggested cuts to front-line services. I've been very clear. I've been very clear in this Chamber just this afternoon. This government intends on maintaining the quality of front-line services, health care, education, how we take care of our senior citizens, and so on. We do need a response from the government in terms of how we're going to manage through our finances facing a \$7 billion shortfall in the coming year. The Minister of Finance is going to table a budget and a fiscal plan that addresses those circumstances. But I want to be clear. Front-line services and the quality of those services is critical to this government, and we stand by Albertans on that.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier thinks that he can take 9 per cent out of the budget and not hurt front-line services, he's living in wonderland.

Now, schools, hospitals, and seniors' homes are so full that they're ready to burst, while people continue to line up outside. This, Mr. Speaker, is not the best of everything. The best of everything has been enjoyed by the Premier's boardroom buddies in corporate high-rises and by his very wealthy friends through massive tax breaks. So given the sacrifices that he's asking regular Albertans to make, why won't he stop protecting his friends and insiders and instead axe the flat tax and raise corporate taxes to bring fairness to this province?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the real issue in terms of taxes is what the NDP is advocating, what the leader of the NDP is suggesting. I would simply pose the question: is she advocating the AFL's so-called Better Way campaign to double personal taxes, to levy an \$11.6 billion tax increase on Albertans? Is that what this party advocates?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I will comment with regard to the new rotation for OQP later. We're trying to get as much in as we can by 3 o'clock, so let's curtail our preambles hereafter to supplementaries.

Let's start with Edmonton-Centre, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Women's Economic Equality

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta women experience the largest income gap in Canada. The recent Parkland study indicates that the highest barriers to women's economic equality are part-time work, precarious work, and unpaid work. Alberta women put in a whole extra 35-hour workweek for domestic care, child care, and elder care. Martha's and Henry's daughters are doing worse, not better, under successive PC governments. To the Premier: why has this province allowed this inequality to continue, giving Alberta women 55 cents on the dollar compared to men?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question today. I have to say that in Human Services we are very committed to diversity in our appointments and the questions about wage parity and all of the challenges that are out there for women that are working. One of the challenges for women who are working is adequate child care, and that's something that we have worked on very hard, with additional spaces for families who need them as well as making sure it's affordable, accessible, and it's quality for women who want to work.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much. Back to that same speaker, thank you for recognizing that there is indeed a very close relationship between child care accessibility and cost and the availability of women for full-time employment in the workforce. However, I would ask the minister whether she recognizes how much the made-in-Alberta solution of this government toward child care has impaired Alberta women's ability to actually get good, quality, accessible child care.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, when we talk about women going into nontraditional occupations, which may demand child care 24 hours a day, most certainly we need to work in that area. We know that child care, if it just goes till 6 at night – many employees work past that. That's an important thing we need to work on. But it's really important to encourage women to go into nontraditional occupations. I look at Women Building Futures, the tremendous work that's going on there. We are moving in the right direction, and we need to encourage women to aspire to and reach for their dreams. [interjection]

Ms Blakeman: Scary thought.

To the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: why has this government steadfastly refused to implement equal pay for work of equal value in the public service in Alberta? That would certainly help close the wage gap.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, wage equity for women is part of Alberta's belief in fair and equal opportunity for all. In fact, the hon. member might like to know that in Alberta women make about \$2 an hour more than the average across the rest of Canada, \$25.38 an hour, and there's more work to do yet. In fact, in the report recently released, one of the points was that women don't have access to higher paying jobs, and that's why when my colleague mentioned programs that we have like Women Building Futures, we're actually allowing women to build those bridges and make those higher wages.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Dental Services in Northern Alberta

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The McLennan, High Level, and La Crête satellite dental clinics are still facing great uncertainty. Although promised funding until the end of July 2015, the employees of the clinic have been assigned their layoff notices, effective the end of March 2015. The clinics are important institutions in our constituencies, in my case serving over 5,000

patients. My question is to the Minister of Health. Will our constituents be facing a permanent closure of the satellite dental clinic?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the clinic is not closing. This is simply an administrative issue. We are simply working to transfer responsibility from Alberta Health to Alberta Health Services. This means funding arrangements and changing, and the collective agreements in place for clinic employees outlines a process that needs to be followed under these circumstances. I understand that receiving layoff notices is frustrating and would be very concerning to all employees, but we will work that system out. This program will continue to provide affordable dental services to rural and remote area individuals.

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. That's excellent news, but can you please confirm if funding is in place for the clinic past the July deadline?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I noted in my previous response, there are no plans to close the clinic, so the funding is in place. My ministry will be transferring funding to AHS for the continuation of the program. McLennan dental clinic is one of three satellite clinics operated by the University of Alberta dental outreach program, and the program reaches a high percentage of vulnerable Albertans and young patients. We intend to continue providing this very important service to Albertans.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

2:40

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: has there been any effort at all to communicate with the University of Alberta and the staff of the satellite dental clinics to ensure that they know their jobs will be secure after the proposed funding expires?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health has been working with Alberta Health Services and the University of Alberta School of Dentistry to continue to support this program. The University of Alberta has outlined all available options for clinical staff, and they have also made it clear that their goal is to maintain employment during this transformation. I want to ensure that affordable dental services, including preventative measures, will continue in Alberta's rural areas.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, I understand you are going next in place of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, so please proceed.

School Construction

(continued)

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, it looks like the PCs inflated their performance yesterday on the progress of new school construction. This morning we heard from the Red Deer school district that a school that the PCs said was starting construction next month has not even gone to tender. Families and communities should come first, not this government's self-interest. To the Infrastructure

minister: how many other schools on this list has the government misled Albertans about?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to comment on the unparliamentary language, really, that this member here is implying. Regardless of the fact, this is the largest school build in Canadian history undertaken by a province, 230 projects under way – 230 projects – of which 30 schools are complete. Two schools have children occupying the schools, and a number of schools are under construction. If there is a specific question about a specific project, I'd be more than happy to provide the answers, as we always have, and make it very publicly available.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think the admonishment has been given. I want to reiterate: let's watch our parliamentary language in the Chamber, please.

Your first supplemental.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If one new school is the largest in Alberta's history, that's pathetic.

Given that yesterday we got an update showing just how far behind the PCs are on school construction – again, 1 school out of 50 that were promised in 2012 – and given that those 50 new schools were election promises, can anyone in this government give Albertans any assurance that there is any reason to take them at their word?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that there are 30 schools today that are completed. There are an additional number of schools that have students actually occupying the schools. Students are in the schools. They're learning in the schools while minor work continues. In addition, 26 tenders are out there right now. The member is more than welcome to go and bid on them himself should he choose. There are 38 under construction right now, 54 in design. These are all publicly available on Alberta Purchasing Connection. I'd invite the member to take a look to see the progress that's . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Final supplemental.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to remind the member that those schools were promised four Premiers ago.

Given that leadership is about taking responsibility and given that no one in the government seems willing to take responsibility for manipulating schools for political purposes, to the Minister of Infrastructure: when will your government stop playing games with our public schools and provide real information that's based on reality, not political opportunism?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, I actually remember attending a school opening in the member's constituency. It was quite unfortunate that the member couldn't attend, but that was a school that was open in the member's constituency. We have attended school openings across this province. We are building schools. More schools are going to tender. More schools are getting their permitting in place. We've met with municipalities to say: how can we work together with our school boards to shorten the process? We're getting the job done.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, your point of order was noted at 2:43 p.m. Point of order at 2:43.

Let's move on to Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Bassano Health Centre

Mr. Hale: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks people are alarmed and concerned about what they have heard regarding the Bassano hospital. A recent report suggests that Bassano is in need of \$1.2 million in repairs or upgrades, which many believe could lead to the potential closure of the hospital. To the Minister of Health: can you please clear the air on this issue and let my constituents know if the Bassano hospital is slated for closure?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to clear the air and say definitely that the Bassano hospital is not slated for closure. We know how important this facility is to the community, and we're committed to keeping it open. We recognize that the hospital has some maintenance issues. We're working with them to try to work through to get them repaired.

Mr. Hale: Mr. Speaker, given that I have delivered members' statements and asked questions on the Newell Foundation's proposal for a one-building, aging in community concept, a proposal which has been worked on for years and was presented to the Health minister of the time, can the minister let us know what the status of this business plan is?

Mr. Mandel: Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the Newell Foundation's leadership in bringing this project forward, and we recognize the value of the aging in community model, which is really vital. A key step in approving any new health facility is the development of a business case, which outlines options and project costs. We're awaiting that, and when that comes in, we'll move forward as quick as possible.

Mr. Hale: Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: given that we've been working on this project for years and that in order for the Bassano health centre to move ahead, AHS needs to sign an agreement, what is the status of that agreement, and when can we expect a signature?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first step before AHS can enter into any operational agreement is to have the business case complete. We're working with them, and we hope that this business case can be done as soon as possible, and then we'll sit down to work out an arrangement to move ahead with this very, very important project.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Sherwood Park.

Full-day Kindergarten

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much. In 2003 the Alberta Learning Commission recommended the government implement full-day kindergarten as such programs are essential to improve child development, especially kids at risk. A decade later the PCs promised to act on it, but Martha's and Henry's kids and their grandkids are still waiting. Now the even fewer remaining programs are in danger of being cancelled due to this Premier's 9 per cent across-the-board cuts. To the Minister of Education: why do you continue to stop Martha's and Henry's kids from getting the head start they need, especially kids most at risk?

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that when our children thrive, they are likely to become adults who are going to thrive. We continue to build a more integrated system of community supports for young children, with my colleague minister to the left, and families by exploring a range of programming and policy options. We are working to balance the needs and priorities of families, schools, and other stakeholders in the community, all while considering the new fiscal reality that we're now facing. School boards, of course, have the option as to whether to offer this kind of full-day programming. In many parts of Alberta they do.

Dr. Swann: They don't have the option, Mr. Minister. They don't have the money, and you know that.

The facts are clear. Full-day kindergarten improves social behaviour and child health, stimulates learning, reduces risk, and develops language and social skills. Why will you not support that as a priority?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, we provide millions of dollars every day to school boards across the province, and they set priorities based on their local needs and determinations as to what is going to be in the best interests of their children. There are full-day kindergarten programs in our province, there are half-time kindergarten programs in our province, and boards make those final determinations based on what they deem to be in the best interests of their students.

Dr. Swann: And how is a 9 per cent cut going to facilitate that, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, we have every intention of ensuring that we provide the funds that are necessary to protect our very important and crucial front-line education services. We want to ensure that every child has the kind of education that is going to help them become the adults that we all want them to be, thrive, develop to their full potential. That's exactly what we intend to do. Stay tuned for the budget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

2:50 Seniors' Facility Safety Upgrades

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Minister of Seniors announced \$80 million to make immediate upgrades to 105 government-owned and -supported seniors' facilities across Alberta. Actually, it was at the Hardisty care centre in the Edmonton-Gold Bar constituency. As MLA for Sherwood Park I was happy to share this good news with the Clover Bar Lodge in my constituency. Unfortunately, the management, while thankful for the funding, was somewhat disappointed. They feel the lodge requires replacement and that putting sprinklers into it would be a waste of money. My first question is to the hon. Minister of Seniors. What process did your ministry use to determine the safety upgrades?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to discuss the process. It is different than it's been in the past. In addition to the fire and safety initiatives, we are also selecting sites for the supportive living grants and the lodge renewal projects. In many cases in the past these would have been the same organizations bringing the proposals forward to us on these three initiatives: our

housing management bodies, our municipalities, and our nonprofits. In the past they would have had to go to three different ministries, three different doors in government, even for the same project, but because this Premier put all the housing in one ministry, these groups have now one window in government to go to. It's allowed us to select projects faster and do more with the money we have. If you're looking for evidence that Alberta is under new management, this is it.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Seniors: will the Clover Bar Lodge ever be replaced?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it's another good question from the member, who's a great advocate for her constituency and talks about her seniors' facilities there often. The lodge renewal program was announced by the Premier in the fall at the AAMD and C. There's \$160 million over the next four years. We're in the process of selecting those sites. This site is certainly a candidate for that, and it will get fair consideration. But, moving forward, we do need to do a lot of work to renew some of our aging lodges and seniors' facilities.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the fact that you'll eventually replace the Clover Bar Lodge, why are you wasting money installing fire and safety systems in facilities that could be bulldozed in just a couple of years?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we certainly don't view this as a waste of money. It may be less than ideal to put some money into some upgrades in some facilities that will be eventually replaced, but we can't compromise the safety of our parents and our grandparents. We can't replace all these facilities in one year, so while this project is a worthy project to be looking at for renewal and potential replacement, we're not going to wait. We're going to get to the fire and safety upgrades at all the facilities that need them, and we will also look at the renewal over time. It's not one, though, or the other; it's both of these things that need to happen.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, your point of order was noted at 2:52 during the first exchange of questions and answers between Sherwood Park and the Minister of Seniors.

Let us move on to Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Red Deer-North.

Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced \$400 million in increased grant monies for municipalities, but confusion has eclipsed this information and this announcement for our community leaders. To the minister: since this government hasn't even come close to meeting its \$11.3 billion MSI funding promises from 2007, is this \$400 million a new, ongoing commitment to our municipalities, or is it just another pre-election promise to mask this government's failed record and win votes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The MSI commitment to our municipal partners is \$11.3 billion, and we have made that commitment and will be

keeping that commitment. MSI has provided over 6 billion, with a "b," dollars to date, has been able to access over 4,800 projects across the province for our municipalities. This is a program that is extremely important to municipalities, one that our municipal leaders support and one that we are long-term funding for them for municipal sustainability.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, but I don't think we've got the answer to the question yet, Minister. Since this government has failed to meet its MSI funding commitment in any given year since '07 and considering that municipalities have consistently called for predictable, sustainable funding over the current complicated grant system instead, will you admit that this current boom-and-bust model doesn't serve our municipal partners well and that it's inadequate for maintaining infrastructure and hampers growth?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government remains committed to investing in infrastructure that supports economic development and keeps Albertans working. That is why approximately \$400 million is being provided from Budget 2014-15 to MSI, to ensure municipalities have the capacity to meet their existing infrastructure project commitments, to keep the economy strong, and to keep Albertans working.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's the same old types of answers and the same old platitudes.

Unlike this government, which could only manage to build one of the 50 schools it promised in 2012, Minister, our municipal officials are planning for the future and building critical infrastructure – or at least they're trying – but they need predictable funding to be successful. Does the minister expect municipalities to be satisfied with the odd injection of extra money rather than a predictable agreement that treats them with respect?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that \$11.3 billion is significant funding, and it is predictable funding. Our municipal leaders very much support the MSI. I travelled across the province to talk to them prebudget. I talked to them, and the number one thing that they support that we do for municipalities is MSI. Quite frankly, last week we had our municipal leaders from AUMA, from AAMD and C, from Red Deer county and city, and they were quite grateful and thankful about the announcement. They support MSI funding.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

Eye Examinations for Children

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children with undiagnosed visual impairments often have serious challenges learning to read, the foundation of all learning. These children usually suffer a loss of self-confidence, self-esteem, which further impairs their ability to learn, and in many cases they develop behaviour problems in school. To the Minister of Education: given that a comprehensive eye exam is one of the best ways to diagnose visual impairments and that the government covers the cost of

comprehensive eye exams for children to the age of 18, how supportive are you of having every child receive a comprehensive eye exam before grade 1?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, kindergarten students may take part in the Eye See ... Eye Learn program, a childhood eye health and vision awareness program funded by Health. Education materials to support school staff in the identification of possible vision problems as well as information for parents about the importance of eye examinations are available through this program, and free eyeglasses are provided to children who require them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, it's 1 minute to 3, so I'm going to recognize the Government House Leader since we have considerable business left in the Routine.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move that the House continue with the proceedings here past 3 p.m. notwithstanding rule 7(7).

The Speaker: The essence of your motion is to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7), which would allow us to go beyond 3 o'clock, complete question period and all the other matters in the Routine.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been given, so that would end the Routine right at 3 o'clock.

You might squeeze in your last question. [interjections]

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that studies have shown that children . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, Red Deer-North has the floor, and let's give it to her for the 30 seconds left.

The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that studies have shown that children with undiagnosed visual impairments often require additional supports in the classroom and are unable to learn to their full potential, what is your ministry doing to ensure that all . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but it is now 3 p.m. We do not have unanimous consent to proceed beyond and conclude the Routine, which includes question period. Apologies to those of you who are left waiting until tomorrow or another day.

With that, we shall move on to Orders of the Day.

My apologies. We have some points of order that must be heard, so we'll have to deviate and hear those now.

I have a point of order that was raised at 2:26 by the Government House Leader with respect to comments and questions coming from the Official Opposition, so would you please proceed with your citation.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Denis: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j), and (l) as well as *Beauchesne's* 489. During her exchange the Leader of the Official Opposition had indicated the word "illegal," which is a prohibited term under *Beauchesne's* 489. I refer you to page 146. At the top thereof it

indicates that there are two items that talk about "illegal" being a prohibited term.

3:00

Secondly, the member had also indicated in a question to the hon. Premier that – I don't have the exact transcript or the Blues, Mr. Speaker, but I believe it referred to buying a member a seat. I would submit to you respectfully that this is unparliamentary language, to assert that someone would buy someone a seat or offer or curry favour, and this clearly is offside of 23(h), (i), (j), and (l). All I would do is just to ask that the member please withdraw these comments and refrain from making them again.

The Speaker: Hon. Opposition House Leader, you would go first normally, but if you're ceding the floor to Edmonton-Centre, I'm prepared to recognize her. It's your wish to recognize her first?

Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Thanks very much. If I just might disagree with the Government House Leader, I understand that in *Beauchesne's* 489 the word "illegal" does appear, but we need to be mindful that that particular section appears as a subsection under rules of debate, not question period, so it's not particularly applying there. If the Government House Leader had been trying to be more specific towards question period, I believe he would have been looking in the section that specifically referred to that, which is much more likely to be – yes, indeed – under the section that begins with 407, which is Oral Questions. Nothing in there talks about use or non-use of the word "illegal."

In addition, of course, we recognize in a number of places that words may be termed illegal at one point but at another point will not be. I would think that since the opposition leader was referencing a piece of legislation passed here that appeared not to be followed or would not be followed, the term was probably correct.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader, briefly, please.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to respond to the first point, about using the term "illegal." Of course, when you make a point of order, you have to do it immediately after the question is given. In the Official Opposition leader's question the term "illegal" was not used just right before the House leader introduced his point of order, so I would suggest that that would be out of order and there's clearly no point of order given that.

The second point. The House leader referred to the Premier buying the seat of the Education minister. I'm very glad that the House leader has brought this up because it allows us to elaborate a little bit more about what occurred during the election. In particular it allows us to talk about the Ethics Commissioner's ruling. I think that's relevant. It provides context to what the Official Opposition leader's comments were. It said:

However, having found that [the Education minister] did not violate the letter of the Act does not mean that his actions with respect to modular classrooms at William Reid School were appropriate.

This is the Ethics Commissioner.

If I had been asked advice on this matter during the campaign, I would have advised the Minister not to make decisions and act on specific issues in his constituency during the by-election. This issue was not one of general policy or ongoing work. . . . His actions, while not contrary to the Legislation, created an unfortunate perception. I would have advised him to leave this

decision, if it were an emergency, to a substitute Minister or, otherwise, to deal with the problem after the election.

This is what the Ethics Commissioner concluded.

In this case the three approvals that were given during the election period and outside the normal approval process appear to have been done for purely political reasons.

What does she mean by purely political reasons? Obviously, if you read the whole judgment, it talks about the fact that when you spend money that helps a member's private interests in terms of getting elected – you know, it's open to debate. Was there causation? Did the abuse of taxpayer dollars as outlined in the Ethics Commissioner's ruling help the Education minister get elected during the by-election? It's probable.

With respect to the exact language, I mean, perhaps the Official Opposition leader could have said, you know, that the Premier spent a lot of taxpayer money in order to get the Education minister elected. If that would please the Government House Leader, I'm sure that we could accommodate that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. members, I think we're all seasoned enough to know that frequently comments get made in the House that sometimes are intended one way and are taken another. I don't have the benefit of the Blues on this occasion. I'm sorry. Normally I would have the Blues, and I'd be able to zip right into the exact verbiage that was used. But in this case I think it's more a matter of interpretation, so I'm not going to find that there is a point of order as such.

However, let us be careful when we're using charged language. At the same time let us be careful when we are referring to an act which clearly does allow for certain things to occur at certain times, and that would be the case with regard to any forthcoming talk of an election. I think you're all acquainted with it. So while the language was a bit charged, I don't find that there's a point of order, but I would ask you to please take greater care, all members, when you're speaking and when you're inferring or otherwise imputing any allegations.

Let us move on, then, to the second point of order, which was raised by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, I think, during the time when the Minister of Infrastructure was speaking.

Please proceed with the second point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise according to Standing Order 23(h),(i), and (j), and it was with respect to the minister's comment about the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview alleging that his language was unparliamentary language. I'd refer the Speaker to *Beauchesne's* paragraph 485, which says, "Unparliamentary words may be brought to the attention of the House either by the Speaker or by any Member." That's referring to that member putting forward a point of order.

Now, it's my understanding in this House that it's you that determines whether language is unparliamentary, not the government or the minister. If the minister felt that it was unparliamentary, clearly the Government House Leader could have risen on a point of order and had you make the ruling on it. Maybe the Government House Leader fell asleep at the wheel here. But his minister can't make that determination; it has to be you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, on a basic submission I would make the argument that alleging that language is unparliamentary is, in fact,

unparliamentary, and I'd ask that you request that the minister retract that statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Anyone else wish to respond?

No. Again, hon. member, I regret not having the Blues, and I will look into that. I don't see immediately that there is a point of order, so I'm going to hold in abeyance my decision till I do see that because I don't have the Blues, unfortunately. It's a rare circumstance.

However, let's again be reminded about parliamentary language and unparliamentary language. It may be suitable in one instance. It might be the same word used again in a different instance, and a different finding could be had. The point is that it's not only the words that are used; it is also the tone, the temperance or lack thereof, the context within which they are used, and the general disposition and mood of the person offering the comments. That being said, a reminder: again, let's please be very, very careful during questions and during answers to not impugn these kinds of motives, if that in fact is the case, on others or onto certain circumstances.

Let us move on to the third point of order, that was raised at 2:52 p.m. by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview during the exchange between Sherwood Park and the Minister of Seniors.

Please proceed.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll cite 23(h), (i), and (j). I just want to clarify for the record that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood attended the opening of Cardinal Collins high school in the Clareview rec centre on my behalf as I was attending my own wedding. I want to assure the minister and the House that I take my duties and responsibilities very seriously in my constituency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I'm not sure what your point of order was or what citation you uttered. I was listening carefully, and I didn't hear one, so shall we just move on now that you've put your comments on record?

All right. Let us then move on. I believe that concludes that. However, I do have a couple of brief statements I need to read to you if you would allow me, please.

Statement by the Speaker

Commonwealth Day Message from the Queen House Leaders' Agreement

The Speaker: First of all, hon. members, as you will know, yesterday was Commonwealth Day, and throughout the world our Commonwealth nations are celebrating with a special message honouring a young Commonwealth given by Her Majesty the Queen. Please note that this message from Her Majesty has been placed on each of your desks for your review and for sharing with your constituents.

I also placed on your desks a copy of the new written agreement amongst all four House leaders. I will read it into the record tomorrow because we are short on time today, but you all have a copy of it on your desks. I'm obligated to read it into the record. I'll dispense with doing that and taking up those two minutes today.

We will move on.

3:10

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to first assure you that I'm not asleep.

Government Motions**Evening Sittings**

16. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the 2015 spring sitting unless on motion by the Government House Leader made before 6 p.m. which may be made orally and without notice, the Assembly is adjourned to the following sitting day.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 16. You've all heard it. This is not debatable.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

The Speaker: We'll move on to the hon. Government House Leader for the next motion.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Adjournment of Spring Session

17. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2015 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, the Government House Leader has moved motion 17. It, too, is not debatable.

[Government Motion 17 carried]

The Speaker: Let us move on.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Committee Membership Changes

18. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that the following changes to
- the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be approved: that Ms Smith be appointed to fill a vacancy;
 - the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved: that Dr. Brown replace Dr. Starke as deputy chair, that Mr. Saskiw replace Dr. Starke, that Mr. Strankman replace Mr. Bikman;
 - the Standing Committee on Private Bills be approved: that Mr. Barnes replace Mr. Strankman;
 - the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing be approved: that Mr. Stier replace Mr. Cao;
 - the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that Mr. Saskiw replace Mr. Sandhu, that

- Mr. Saskiw replace Mr. Anderson as chair, that Mr. Anglin replace Mr. McAllister;
- the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved: that Mr. Strankman be appointed to fill a vacancy;
- the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be approved: that Mr. Stier be appointed as deputy chair, that Mr. Barnes replace Mr. Horne;
- the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that Mr. Barnes replace Mrs. Jablonski, that Mr. Barnes be appointed as deputy chair, that Mr. Strankman replace Mr. McAllister;
- the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be approved: that Mr. Strankman replace Mr. Anglin, that Mr. Strankman be appointed as deputy chair, that Mr. Stier replace Mr. Casey.

Mr. Denis: Going once, going twice. Mr. Speaker, I hope that's sold.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, this motion is debatable. However, if no one else wishes to speak, then let's go for the question.

Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

Transmittal of Estimates

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've received a certain message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've received this message from His Honour via the Minister of Finance, and it reads: the Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, and please be seated.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When supplementary estimates are tabled, section 8.3 of the Fiscal Management Act requires that an updated fiscal plan be tabled. Accordingly, I wish to table the 2014-15 third-quarter fiscal update, which serves as the amended fiscal plan. The 2014-15 third-quarter fiscal update has already been provided to all members and released publicly as required by the financial management act. The quarterly fiscal update provides a framework for additional spending authority for the Legislative Assembly and for the government.

I now wish to table the 2014-15 supplementary supply estimates. Mr. Speaker, the supplementary supply estimates will provide additional spending to one office of the Legislative Assembly and 11 government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize approximate increases of \$730,000, an expense in capital investment of the Legislative Assembly, \$459 million in operational funding, \$705 million in capital funding, and \$63 million in financial transaction funding for the government. These

estimates will also authorize the transfer of \$4.8 million of the previously approved spending authority for the Department of Municipal Affairs to capital investment within the Department of Seniors.

The Speaker: I understand that the message and the supplementary supply estimates have been distributed to everyone by the pages, correct? [interjection] Well, they will be shortly. That is my understanding.

Pages, as soon as you're able, if you could distribute those to all the members of the Assembly, that would be appreciated.

Government Motions (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

19. Mr. Campbell moved:

Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2014-15 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this motion is debatable. Does anyone wish to speak to this?

An Hon. Member: Question.

The Speaker: Okay. The question has been called.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, you had a point?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. I just wanted to get some clarification. We seem to have missed the notice of motion for a point of privilege, so I just wanted to get that on the record.

The Speaker: I've indicated to you twice that I'll address it in a moment, but let's deal with this first, please.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Great. Thanks a lot.

The Speaker: The question has been called, then.

[Government Motion 19 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

20. Mr. Campbell moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2014-15 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for six hours on Wednesday, March 11, 2015.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has moved Government Motion 20. This is not debatable.

[Government Motion 20 carried]

The Speaker: Just before we move on, I've had a couple of questions with regard to the point of privilege that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder did appropriately submit to my office within the time frames and so on. Unfortunately, we had to get unanimous

consent to continue on with the Routine, and, as you know, Notices of Motions are part of the Routine, and first a notice of motion would have to be uttered in the Assembly. That opportunity was not available, and therefore we'll probably deal with it tomorrow, hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. So we'll move on.

Hon. Government House Leader, did you wish to make a comment here as to where you'd like to go?

Mr. Denis: No, Mr. Speaker. I just would move the item on behalf of the hon. President of Treasury Board. I have no further comments.

The Speaker: Actually, that has already been dealt with, and we're looking to see if you have other business that you wish to attend to this afternoon. If you do, that's what we're looking to hear.

Mr. Denis: Well, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Order Paper third reading of Bill 10 is going on here. Does that require a motion at this point?

The Speaker: As you wish. Bill 10 is on the Order Paper, and it would require somebody to move it at third reading if that's where you wish to proceed. I don't have any knowledge of that in my script, so if there's an agreement that that's where you wish to go, then we'll look forward to somebody who is sponsoring the bill to either move it at third reading or to someone on behalf of the member sponsoring it to move third reading at this time.

3:20

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education or Government House Leader, would you like to move third reading of Bill 10 on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-North West? I need someone to move it at third reading.

Mr. Denis: Okay. I'm rising on behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Education who wishes to move third reading of Bill 10. I believe there are 10 minutes to speak, Mr. Speaker. Is that correct?

The Speaker: It's Calgary-North West, isn't it? Hon. Government House Leader, I believe it's actually a bill sponsored by Calgary-North West on behalf of the government.

Mr. Denis: I rise on behalf of the Member for Calgary-North West to move third reading.

I understand there's 10 minutes of time. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker? Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Denis: My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that we're waiting for some amendments to come by and that there's one hon. member opposite that wishes to have this bill moved back to Committee of the Whole so certain amendments may be held. I will take my seat so that you can hopefully recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. A little tough not to see her today.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I believe we have arrived at your space.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just delighted to rise and speak in third reading on Bill 10, and I'm delighted because what I am going to be doing here is moving a recommittal motion to move us back from third reading to Committee of the Whole in anticipation that we may be able to do some good work here today and make some changes to Bill 10. Of course, they're changes that I would really like to see. So, you know, you can understand why I want to do the recommittal motion.

Now, what was the problem? Well, as most of you know now, either here or in Internet land, I had introduced private member's Bill 202, in which I was trying to do a few small things that would be very meaningful to a number of people in Alberta. Specifically, I wanted to see that where students in a school asked for a gay-straight alliance, they would be accommodated and that there would be no discrimination that was specific to gay-straight alliances, that the students would be allowed to call the organization or the school group or the peer group a gay-straight alliance. Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to underline that again. That is important because these kids have to know that that's what it is and that it's clearly delineated and that they are able to go there and know that it's a safe space for them. It's not helpful if they are going to a diversity group or a multi-acceptance group or something by any other name. In other words, it was really important to me that there'd be no euphemisms. Use of euphemisms can be misunderstood, and if a kid accidentally outs themselves in a group that isn't a GSA, they're in serious trouble, serious physical trouble, probably setting themselves up for some pretty dramatic bullying as well. So it's important to me that they could call it a gay-straight alliance if they wanted to.

I understand that for some faith groups that is a challenge, but I believe that the Rocky Mountain Civil Liberties Association did superior work in their two public hearings done in Edmonton and Calgary, in which they opened it up to parents and students and brothers and sisters and neighbours to come forward and speak about how important GSAs were in schools for kids that had them and for kids that couldn't get them, and those kids were brilliant, absolutely brilliant. They spoke with passion and intellect and focus and understanding. They put the adults to shame, quite frankly, and I enjoyed every minute of it, and I was at all three consultations that were done, including the one sponsored by the Youth Council from the city of Edmonton in conjunction with the Edmonton Social Planning Council and Public Interest Alberta. Those kids so got it. They so got it.

I believe that the amendment is at the table. Yes, and it is currently being distributed.

This is a recommittal motion. I do these fairly often; I just don't get to get them passed very often. So we'll hope that that's going to happen here and that we've got the support of the Assembly to do that. Essentially what it does is say: "You know what? We need to go back to Committee of the Whole because there are some things that we want to look at again." Specifically, we want to look at and reconsider sections 1, 2, 3, and 5, and my thanks to Parliamentary Counsel for making my way through all of that and for helping me with the right language, because I didn't have it right the first time. Unusual, I know, but it just keeps me humble, don't you understand, when I make mistakes in public, no less.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Education for going and listening to those students. I faulted him a lot publicly for not holding a public consultation. I think he should have, but I do appreciate that he actually went to the groups where kids were talking, and I know those kids had an effect on him. They had an effect on me. I hope someday you all get a chance to read the papers that were produced both by the Rocky Mountain Civil Liberties Association and the

one produced by the young people from the City of Edmonton Youth Council because they are just drop-dead amazing.

That's what the kids said. You know, GSAs are safe. I remember one kid that said: I just dreaded every day; I dreaded going to school; I dreaded every hour that I was in school, and then I went to another school, and there was a GSA there, and in three weeks my life turned around. Can you imagine? Her life turned around completely. She went from being on medication to joining a number of clubs, finding a leadership role, a leader in her home community, joined a bunch of stuff at the school. She just blossomed, just exploded, just took her place, as she should, as a young leader of today.

So I'm very pleased that the minister was able to go and listen to the students and the parents and the neighbours and the people that run associations who came out to these hearings and that he went to GSAs in different schools and talked to different people and that they were able to convince him, as he mentioned in his ministerial statement, of some draft ideas that he would like to bring forward.

I'd like to thank the Premier for his support. I know that it's rough trying to paddle that canoe upstream in a caucus as big as this one if you don't have the support of the leadership, and I do thank the Premier for his support and leadership in this. I'm so glad that you all heard those students. It was important that you did.

I also really want to thank the Trojan work of the Member for Calgary-North West, who responded so eloquently to my colleague's Motion 503 and did bring forward Bill 10 with the best of intentions, I know, although I disagreed with her absolutely. But that's okay. We will come through this, I'm sure.

So I'd like to get the motion on the floor if you don't mind, Mr. Speaker. So at this point I will move this motion, which would be numbered as A1 or R1.

The Speaker: A1. Amendment A1.

Ms Blakeman: I'm getting the body language here.

The Speaker: We'll go with A1 in case there's another one. That's our tradition.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Let's go with A1. So I'd like to move A1. I will move that the motion for third reading of Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 1, 2, 3, and 5.

Please support this, everybody, so that we can do this. I look forward to – who knows? – unanimous support, and we will get this sucker back into Committee of the Whole and get this fixed.

Thank you very much.

3:30

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition on the amendment.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly pleased, actually, to stand up and support the motion by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I think, as she's alluded to in some of her speaking notes, that it's amazing how the Marthas and Henrys of the world have changed. I have not been shy to explain where my life has been in regard to this particular issue. You know, I can hardly wait till the day ends and I get to pick up the phone and call

a family member and talk to him about the fact of being part of our family for the last – well, I don't want to say how long because then it says how old I am, and I'm not going to go there on that. [interjection] Twenty-nine and holding.

I'm honoured, actually, as I said, to stand up and support the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I think this is a good day for us in the Legislature, I think it's a good day, actually, for Albertans, and I think it's even a better day for the children in this province, quite frankly. I have always wondered why we hadn't been able to support this bill in the past when we're talking about clubs and how we view clubs and how we don't view clubs and what clubs are good to have in a school and what clubs aren't good to have in a school. I remember that in this Legislature many, many years ago, when as a government member I had to deal with the issue of same-sex marriage, there was a lot of controversy at that particular time – I can't even remember how many years ago that was – suggesting that the world isn't going to be any different tomorrow when we wake up, that it's going to be the same.

I am proud to stand up and support this motion. I am looking forward, as I'm sure my colleague is, to seeing the amendments. Quite frankly, I haven't seen the amendments other than what's appeared on Twitter. That's unfortunate, that it's hitting the Twittersphere before it's hitting what members in this Legislature can see. Debate, I'm sure, is going to be interesting.

I just have one question for the House leader if I may, because I'm not the Government House Leader. Am I understanding by reading the government motions that you're putting time allocation on these bills? Is that my understanding? Okay. Good. He's shaking his head no. That's good. I was wondering why on a bill that they consider so important, they would want to put . . . [interjection] No. I'm used to him, Mr. Speaker. I don't even have my hearing aids in. His voice seems to carry, similar to how people tell me mine does also. I'm glad that he's clarified that because that's one of the things.

We will be supporting the Member for Edmonton-Centre's amendment, and I look forward to seeing the amendments as they hit the Legislature. I just want to end by saying that this is a good day for Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Are there any other speakers to the amendment? The leader of the ND caucus.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've made many of my comments already in the response to the ministerial statement, but of course I'm pleased with the opportunity to support this motion so that it can go back into committee. With any luck, we can make some positive changes to Bill 10 as it previously existed and turn it into something that would be of use to the children of this province and, in particular, those who are members of the LGBTQ community as well as the adults who are members of the LGBTQ community.

I'm looking forward to that opportunity because I think that we could potentially do some good work here. I'm hoping that if we do go back into committee, we move through this at a respectful pace because we'd like the chance to review these amendments in the context of the act to determine whether there are opportunities for us to make improvements to the proposals that are coming from the government.

You know, some preliminary conversations that I've had are conversations that suggest that there wouldn't necessarily be disagreement on some of the points that we have raised as a question or as a concern, but that requires ensuring that we have enough time to carefully and thoughtfully analyze the language

that's being put forward, analyze the language in the context of the bill as it currently exists, and draft our own proposed alternatives.

I very much support the idea of this matter going back into committee, but my hope is that members of this Assembly will then be given a couple of days to look at the proposed amendments before we vote on them all, because, of course, if one of the amendments is approved, then it may well block our ability to touch on that issue if we're only reading it as it's passing. If we're going to have a proper discussion about these amendments, we'd like a chance to review them and review the language that's being proposed with a little bit more, as I say, thoughtfulness because we are, really, potentially looking at a very historic time. So let's do it effectively and conscientiously in the process.

I'm very much in favour of this motion, and I look forward to having a considered conversation about moving forward on these changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others?

If not, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment carried unanimously]

The Speaker: Hon. members, just before we move on, I want to express how delighted I am that there was such a high and positive spirit of co-operation amongst all parties, including the independent member, on this very important matter, which is clearly a high priority for Albertans throughout our province. I'm equally pleased that proper process was followed and that House leaders amongst themselves, perhaps with the help of others, found a way to get it done. It shows you that history like that can be made in our Assembly, and I'm delighted to be presiding over it, believe me. So thank you, all, for that spirit of great co-operation.

We shall move into Committee of the Whole, then, and hear whatever the committee might yield. Let us recess briefly for about 30 seconds.

3:40 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 10 An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Dirks: Yes. I would like to move amendments to Bill 10. I believe they have been provided to the table and are prepared to be circulated now to all members.

The Deputy Chair: We'll pause for a moment while the amendment is being distributed. Hon. members, since this is a continuation of our last Committee of the Whole on Bill 10, this amendment will be known as amendment A6.

Minister, you can proceed if you are ready.

Mr. Dirks: Thank you. I do want, first, to say thank you to all members for agreeing to move into Committee of the Whole so that

we can consider these important amendments, A6, that are now before us. I'm not going to give lengthy comments because I did make a significant ministerial statement on this. I just want to walk us through the four clauses, essentially.

Section 35.1(1): here we are giving students the opportunity to have a GSA in their school if they request one. If they ask a staff member for support

to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall . . .

You'll notice there that it is the principal of the school.

- (a) permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and
- (b) designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.

It's appropriate, I believe, that the legislation direct the principal to do this as this is an activity that's happening at the local level. Education legislation in our province, of course, does give significant direction to principals in our world, so I think this is a significant improvement on the previous iteration of the bill. That iteration talked about boards getting involved, and this, essentially, keeps things at the local school level, where I think it's most appropriate for it to be determined.

The principal permits the establishment of the school organization or the holding of the activity at the school and designates a staff member to serve as the staff liaison. Now, we know there may be unique circumstances where a staff member may not be able to or perhaps even willing to, and we'll come to that later.

If we go over to the next clause:

For the purposes of subsection (1), an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to [a broad range of criteria] without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

Here we have a very large expression of options for students to establish the kind of organization that is going to accomplish what was talked about in 35.1(1). So while we are talking significantly this day about gay-straight alliances, the reality is that the legislation does permit a broad range of student clubs to be established in schools, and we can envision, if we wanted to, what some of those might be perhaps in the future, but we don't need to go there today. It's simply important to note that the legislation facilitates that to happen.

Then if we go to clause (3):

The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization, including the name "gay-straight alliance" or "queer-straight alliance", after consulting with the principal.

We did hear in our consultations that students, of course, wanted and others felt that they should be able to name their organization. Some of them have actually moved away from the name gay-straight alliance and are using the terminology queer-straight alliance, as we know, and there may be other names that might come up. This amendment is suggesting, of course, that it be a respectful and inclusive name, and consulting with the principal before the name is actually picked would be a reasonable and respectful thing for students to do in the school environment, I think.

Then, finally:

The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (1), and if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.

There may be circumstances and I think it's important for the legislation to acknowledge and accommodate where a staff member may not be available to facilitate, and in such a situation it would be sensible and prudent for the minister to provide for the organization to be established, which is, of course, the intent of the first section that we talked about.

With those comments, I trust that all members will support this very important amendment to Bill 10.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you. I'm pleased to rise in regard to the government amendment to Bill 10, which is An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect Our Children. I am going to be supporting this amendment. I guess I'm just concerned about the fact of the process. I appreciate that the Government House Leader and the Premier want to get this passed. I'm just truly concerned about the rush.

I had a note from the House leader in regard to passing this amendment today, and I explained to him that, first of all, I've hardly had the opportunity to even look at the amendment – I'm scribbling and trying to write and trying to listen to the Minister of Education as best I can – and we have not even had this discussion as a caucus to make sure that things that need to be covered in this amendment are covered. I say that with all sincerity. I believe this is the third time that, you know, we've discussed this, and it's important that we get it right.

3:50

You made a comment in your speaking notes, Minister, when you were talking about clubs, and you were saying: well, we don't need to go there today. Well, I'm not sure. If we don't go there today, when are we going to go there? You know, is that tomorrow or after the election? All that sort of thing. I can't understand why we don't have the opportunity to kind of clearly read this, clearly have a discussion, and then come back tomorrow. I mean, we have a caucus meeting at 9 o'clock. We can have some thorough discussion.

It bothers me that such an important piece of legislation is dropped on our desk, first of all, by a process that I find unacceptable. When a minister is doing a ministerial statement, never in this Legislature do I remember that ministerial statement not being shared with the opposition, and we alluded to that when we were discussing that. Then you question about what's going to be in the bill, and it's: trust me. You know, I guess for me, Minister, it's about the fact of being able to read the amendments, see if this is what people in the gay-straight alliance want, if it's what they're looking for in a bill. I'm, quite frankly, going to do something that I haven't done in the past. I'm going to look to the Member for Edmonton-Centre and will be listening to her to understand if everything that's in this amendment is included in what she requests.

What I do like are some of the things under 35.1(1), where it says:

If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization . . .

I think Albertans will realize that we're not mandating anything. It's a voluntary club, so we don't have to worry that we're trying to

shove something down that, you know, people don't – this is a voluntary club, and that's what it should be.

You go on to the point – you know, one thing I've learned in this Legislature is that there's a big difference between "shall" and "may". I see that you're saying that

the principal of the school shall . . .

which is good. That's saying that you have to do that. It's not a "may"; it's a "shall."

- (a) permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and
- (b) designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation.

We go on about the principal. If you can't get a staff member, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate . . .

The Deputy Chair: Excuse me, hon. member. I hate to interrupt you, but the level of noise in the Assembly has reached a higher level than is acceptable. If you have conversations that you need to have, you can take those out into the Confederation Room or another room.

Hon. member, would you please continue, and maybe we can decrease the noise level.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you. It's hard to even think. Obviously, the government members think there are more important things to discuss than listening to the debate on this bill, that they are insisting has to be passed today.

It talks about:

The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (1), and if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment.

I guess the question I have there is: why would you not have a responsible adult in a school whose mandate is the protection of the children that attend that school, that they have to find someone outside of the school to be responsible? You know, you have these little spidey senses that start going off when we have to look elsewhere to have the establishment of a club. I think what's important is the fact that – what has been presented before is something that's important. I mean, we don't have to discuss about – and we've heard the discussion as we've debated this bill – the high rate of suicides. So all of a sudden you can't even find a responsible adult in the school that is willing to work with the group or organization, and the minister then has to appoint somebody.

It goes on to the support for student organizations.

If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall . . .

There's "shall" again.

. . . permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity.

And then he designates a staff member.

I expect that this legislation will go very quickly through the Legislature, and I could be wrong – and I hope I'm wrong – but I would expect that this legislation will come back again because we've missed something because it's been so rushed from the government in regard to an amendment. I'm hoping that the Member for Edmonton-Centre is going to be able to speak up and clear some of the things, if there's anything that she spots, that

might be a problem in this amendment. I haven't honestly had the opportunity to spend a lot of time going through this amendment.

I am actually looking forward to the debate. I guess, on the record again, I just can't understand why we have one day. We've spent literally months and months – I don't even remember when your Bill 202 first came out. Was it a year ago?

Ms Blakeman: No. It was the very end of October, beginning of November.

Mrs. Forsyth: October of 2014.

Then we had Bill 10, and now we have an amendment that's just hit our desks that we haven't, frankly, had the opportunity to even look at, let alone discuss, that's going to be passed. I will say that there's no question that I support gay-straight alliances in schools. I've been on the record suggesting that and saying that. Again, let's just make sure it's right.

This is obviously hasty legislation. When I questioned the minister that I met with at 11:30 in regard to the speech that the minister was going to give in his minister's statement, I was informed by the minister that I had a meeting with that it hadn't even been written then. If I may, Madam, I hope we're right and we've got this right the first time and we don't come back two weeks down the road and say, "oops, we forgot something," or "oops, we didn't check this."

Those are my comments, other than, again, being on the record that I support this. As they say, let's get it right the first time. I look forward to hearing, actually, from other members on the government side, and I look forward to hearing what the Member for Edmonton-Centre has to say.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise and speak in our Committee of the Whole to government amendment A6. A fairly dense amendment, but it does appear to be tracking exactly as the minister had outlined in his statement earlier today. The first thing we have – and I actually, as I was flipping through my notes, found amendment A4, which was actually moved by the leader of the fourth opposition, the ND opposition, who had an amendment that's exactly what's being proposed in section A of the amendment here, which is specifically to include sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, or gender expression.

You know, I have to compliment the government for taking this step. I know that gender identity and gender expression is a bit of a leap for some people if they're not familiar with what it means and who it affects and what the possibilities are. I was really hoping that this could be included, and it's why I had included it in the language that I used in Bill 202, but I am really pleased to see that the minister and the Premier and the government caucus were able to understand and to include those two categories of gender identity and gender expression.

4:00

Just briefly, in case anybody following at home does want to know what that is – well, if I could tease the minister just a tiny bit.

Mr. Dirks: No.

Ms Blakeman: "No," he says. "Please don't tease me anymore."

Well, you know, let's say that there's a situation where somebody walks into a classroom and looks around and says: "Oh, gee. You

know, how come it's all one sex in here?" Well, that's kind of a thing in this day and age, that we've come to understand that gender identity is more along a continuum. Oh, I'm getting a very odd *déjà vu*. Who was it that was talking about somewhere between Marilyn Monroe and Charles Bronson? Right? That's a heck of a continuum. But, in fact, we're now coming to understand that people fall somewhere on that continuum. Not all men are Charles Bronson, and not all women are Marilyn Monroe.

Ms Calahasen: Oh, come on.

Ms Blakeman: I know. Isn't that just crushing? What a blow, but it's true. Some members are more Marilyn Monroe than others. I'll give that to the hon. member from Slave Lake. Okay.

But that is what these kids today are understanding even better than their parents or their grandparents understood, and the way they express that is quite unique and often fun but kind of bizarre to somebody that's not really understanding what's going on there. Once you start to accept that, you know, somewhere between Marilyn Monroe and Charles Bronson, is – we're all on there somewhere. We're just closer to one end than to the other, one imagines.

I'm really glad that the government was brave enough to take that step, and I will give you credit for being brave. That one wasn't easy, and it wasn't a gimme. I didn't think you'd be able to go there.

Then we have the removal of the reference to section 35.1, which is part of your C section. I'm going to have to come back to that one because I don't have the right pieces of paper. This is the wonderful thing about Committee of the Whole, as I'm sure you're aware, Madam Chair, that you can speak more than once, so if you can't find your piece of paper right now, you can find it later and get up and correct your remarks then.

Section C is where a lot of the meat is, or for people who don't eat meat then the aubergine or whatever anybody is using as a meat substitute these days. That is saying that if students ask for a voluntary student organization that is intended to be welcoming and caring as compared to being, you know, discriminatory and nasty, that the local principal "shall," which is an important wording, as my colleague the Official Opposition leader pointed out, "permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school." Right on. It has to be at the school. "Designate a staff member to serve as staff liaison" for the organization or help it to organize: that's really good because in a lot of cases we've got very connected teachers, teachers that understand the kids in this school, that want to be involved in being the adviser to a gay-straight alliance or to other kinds of voluntary student groups, and I would hope that they would be chosen and would be allowed to do that.

In schools where nobody wants to do it, and we can think of a few examples of where that might happen, we do have a section a little later on that deals with that. That is subsection (4), under C.

The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (1), and if so informed, the Minister shall . . .

Not might, not wiggle room, not maybe, not if the sun is shining. It says shall.

. . . appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.

So if you have a school where the staff say, "Nope. Not interested. Thank you very much," and no staff member is coming forward to do it, you have a process here that's outlined where the principal

goes to the minister and the board and says, "Okay. I don't have anybody," and the minister would then appoint someone.

Let me tell you, there are some good people out there. For example, in the Edmonton public school system – oh, as soon as I thought about her, her name went right out of my head. She's running the GSA round-table. She's employed by the Edmonton public school system, which is just light years ahead of us all and really leading the way on this issue. She would be a responsible person to have the minister appoint to help a student establish such a thing. The other woman I'm thinking of works for altView, which is an organization out of Sherwood Park established by my friend Bryan Mortensen, and I am not going to remember her name either. Claudette, Colleen, something like that. She goes out to schools as requested and works with the staff and the students to help put this together.

You know, there are people that exist, that have expertise, that are what I would call a responsible adult, that can be appointed by the minister to go into the school and fill that position if the staff are unwilling to do so, and I think that's an important part of it. It's to work with the students, to organize the activity, or to facilitate the establishment and/or the ongoing operation, so we're covering a lot of ground here.

We have the organization being established. We've talked about the staff that are going to look after it. As the minister spoke – this covers a lot of different kinds of student organizations, but it's meant to be peer support, leadership, nondiscriminatory clubs that are meant to help kids be resilient. You know, Kristopher Wells from ISMSS has joined us in the gallery, and that's a term I've heard him say, that the point of it is to help build resiliency in kids so that when they've got that support group, they can learn and build their resiliency so when they're in situations that aren't so great, they have that resiliency to get through it. They have the wherewithal to stand up and say, "No. You know, you can't bully me like that," or "Don't say that" to some other person, or just to withstand it and get home or walk away from the situation. That's the kind of thing we're trying to build in these kids so that they can get through it on their own and that they come through it in a way that's about thriving. It's about doing well; it's not about coming out kind of battered. I love that term, "resiliency."

I think that's what we're looking at here. In particular, it uses kind of a tip of the hat to the language that I was using because it talks about – it's not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, antiracism clubs, and antibullying clubs, which is what I was asking, that gender and sexual orientation not be discriminated against when we looked at all these clubs, and I think we've captured that here.

4:10

I spoke earlier about how important it was not to have to default to euphemisms when the kids name these clubs, and, in fact, that's the section that we're looking at in section (3). It says that

the students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization . . .

Someday I'm going to buy the minister a glass of wine and find out what would not be a respectful and inclusive name for an organization. I'm sure he's heard some, but I can't imagine what they'd be. Anyway, a respectful and inclusive name for the organization

. . . including the name "gay-straight alliance" or "queer-straight alliance", after consulting the principal,

so you've got to have the principal involved here. But one of the things I was trying to be careful of, and this is another one of Kris's big things, is that the principal could not stop them, could not say: no, you're not going to call it that. I think that's one of the concerns

that I really had, and this says that they are going to be able to call it that. I'm looking at the minister, and he's nodding his head at me. Okay. So they may call it that, but they do have to consult the principal.

Then we've got the last section, section D, which is the support for student organizations, which says that if they're requesting a staff member employed by the board to support this or to lead the activity, "the principal of the school shall permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity" – listen carefully – "at the school." And that's important because one of the big fights we had on this one was that somehow we would hold it somewhere else but not in the school, that it could be in a community league, or, you know, down the road somewhere, or as I, in a very uncomplimentary way, said, in a garden shed on the property, which is not what we wanted.

The whole point is that if these kids have a bad experience at school or at home, they can go to their club meeting, their safe space, in the school. That's the safe space. Folks, you know, I don't want to hammer on this too hard, but you've got to remember that for a lot of these kids the safe space is not at home, and that's why we have to make sure that safe space is offered to them in the school, not in the garden shed, not down the road, not at the community league; in the school.

So in this case, where they have requested the organization, "the principal shall" – not maybe, not when the sun is shining, but shall – "permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school," and "designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate" it. And it goes on to talk about "an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to . . ." and then we have the list, which is a long list now. As far as I can tell, everybody is on it. Just the thing about lists: you've got to have them all. But it does include

. . . without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity,

Yes.

. . . gender expression . . .

Yes.

. . . physical disability, mental disability, family status, or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

Oh, I think I just repeated myself. Sorry about that.

An Hon. Member: It's never happened.

Ms Blakeman: Not usually.

The last two sections. Section E is amending section 3(7), so it's pulling out section 16.1, which I haven't had time to look at, so I'm going to go back and look at – oh, that's sounding very familiar. Okay. I'm going to go back and look at what 16.1 is and what 35.1 is, and I will have that by the time I get up to speak the next time. The final section, section F, is amending by striking out March 1, 2015, and substituting June 1, 2015. I'm just going to take a wild flyer here and assume that that is the proclamation date of the act or when it's all supposed to be implemented.

So I hope that's helped alleviate some of the concerns that I know people had. I know there's a concern about rushing this through, but, I'll tell you: sometimes you have to seize the moment, and the moment is now. I would really encourage people to seize it and to pass the government amendments now, today – look, we have all this time – then we could also pass it through third, and we would have it today. Because remember, my gentle ones, we've already had the passage of Government Motion 20, which, in fact, says that tomorrow, Wednesday, all day, we will be doing supplementary

supply, so we wouldn't be able to come back to this tomorrow, and who knows what we're going to get up to on Thursday, some of that really exciting legislation that they're going to bring in soon, like the fisheries act. So let's try and get this done today.

I'm comfortable enough with it. I'm going to go and check the two sections I'm not quite sure of right now because I didn't memorize the whole thing, and I will allow someone else to speak before I do that.

I'm so sorry, Madam Chair. I'm getting a lot of recognition today. I appreciate that, and I'm basking in it, but really the person that started all of this is my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo [some applause] – thank you – who, you know, really struck out into the wilderness of human rights and education acts in Alberta with his Motion 503 and really did a brilliant job of bringing this onto the agenda and keeping it on the agenda long enough to inspire me to try it again. My thanks to him because that is a big – you know, you don't change public policy with one person. It's always a group of people coming from different places for the same good reason. I do want to make sure that we recognize that he was an integral part of this coming to the place that it is today.

I'm going to sit down and let someone else speak while I rush about and check these two other sections out. I look forward to part B. Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a great honour to be able to speak to these amendments brought forward to Bill 10 by the government. I guess the question I ask is: now, boys and girls, was that so hard? No, of course it wasn't. Being on the right side of legislation in human rights in the direction of forwarding your society in those ways is important, and governments need to do it more often. So I thank the government for bringing forward this legislation.

Gay-straight alliances lead to less bullying in all schools and lead to fewer suicides and let kids live freer, more inclusive lives, that they are allowed to be who they want to be and not feel ashamed, bullied, or otherwise as a result. Gay-straight alliances work – the research is clear – and I am glad we have acted on that evidence today and gone forward on the path we have.

But I'd also like to go through a little bit of the history on how we got here. The hon. leader of the fourth party brought up some of the dark days of this province in terms of our respect for the LGBT community. We have to look back to 1998, the Vriend decision that came out of the Supreme Court of Canada, where it was ordered by the Supreme Court that sexual orientation be added to the grounds prohibited to be discriminated against. Alberta, to our shame, fought against that proposal. We fought against it for a full decade. Where other provinces accepted it as an idea whose time has come, an idea where we embrace human rights, not limit them, yet we chose to do the other thing for a full decade.

I will note that in 2008, when I got here, we seemingly were moving the ball a little bit forward. We heard a proposal that would allow for sexual orientation finally to be recognized in our human rights code. In fact, my first question in this hon. House when I became a member was to the then Justice minister asking: when are we going to have sexual orientation become part of our human rights code? We found that that day was coming, but it wasn't without some quid pro quo.

4:20

That was in the unfortunate Bill 44 debates. What transpired out of that was a little bit: well, okay, we're going to give the LGBT community the sexual orientation clause in the Human Rights Act,

but we're not going to give up our social conservative roots that easily. In there we had an addition to our human rights code under 11.1 that many in our LGBT community felt discriminated against them, and rightfully so. We saw that sexual orientation was deemed not worthy of discussion in our classrooms.

Really, how that ever got put into a Human Rights Act, I, for the life of me, do not understand. It had no place when you compared it to other human rights legislation across Canada, in fact throughout much of the world. It was regressive. It was silly. It was just a mean-spirited act that the social cons in the governing party of the day put in to champion parental rights issues. In fact, many of the people who are still here today, well, guess what? They trotted along on this path for a long time.

We can also look at: hey, Alberta was the last province to officially recognize same-sex marriage. We did that just recently, and we were laggards in that regard, too.

So here we are today. I guess we have turned the page under this unfortunate history that has been Alberta in embracing human rights. That's a good thing. Guys, I'm happy we have done so. But I think this should be a lesson to this government, that what they often did in respect to this was that they didn't get out and lead; they often followed. They used politics, admittedly probably to their advantage. In 2004 when you did polling on same-sex marriage in this province, well, 70 per cent of Albertans were against that principle happening. Fast forward to today. Now about 85 per cent of the population is in favour of that happening.

The government of the day back in 2004 probably had the politics right. Okay. Generally it was within the sentiment of what the Alberta population was feeling. They didn't have the principle right. Of course, it was not within the spirit of moving human rights forward, and in fact it would have showed great leadership by getting out and saying: "Look, here we are. We are the government of the day. We are not going to tolerate this. We are going to get out and lead." Eventually that statement of principle by governments gets your population there quicker. That's what I advise the current government to do more often.

Look, we've been laggards in a whole host of areas. You know, seat belt legislation: last province. Smoking in restaurants: last province to recognize this. Now on LGBTQ rights, one of the last provinces to get there, all because we're basing it on polling, not on what is fundamentally right to human rights and moving the chains of justice forward. I think that this government should be more bold in that expression of doing what's right, making the case to the people, and showing leadership in that regard. That's what I would like to see going forward.

Today is a red-letter day for this province. I feel very proud that I played a small role in this, putting forward Motion 503. I put forward the notion that schools, whether they be public schools, Catholic schools, or private schools, where kids wanted to have a gay-straight alliance, that was to be mandatory. I knew from what was going on in the community that at all of these three school systems, for various reasons, kids were not being allowed to have a GSA, and that was unfortunate. So this is a good public policy piece that I thought would save kids' lives.

Starting that debate was important. Of course, my friend from Edmonton-Centre did a great job of putting forward Bill 202, and it corrected a lot of the errors of the past as well as added the notion that gay-straight alliances be made available in all schools where kids want them. I think it served an important role in galvanizing support behind an issue.

We can look to this exercise that we have gone through in this House and out in the public for why opposition MLAs are important. They really are. Without Motion 503, without Bill 202, I doubt that the government would have moved forward on this

issue for perhaps another five, maybe 10 years. Okay? All during that time kids would have been left unprotected, vulnerable, bullied, and committing suicide at greater rates should we not have had this debate. We must remember that.

This was a red-letter day for democracy. It's how the system should work. Sometimes opposition members need to put up ideas that the government may not be thinking of and may actually be in opposition to their current policies or current direction that they believe is in the best interest of our society. What we saw by this exercise was really a celebration of our system. We put up an issue, people got behind it, they told the government where they stood, and lo and behold good public policy was instituted that wasn't in the government's bailiwick.

This is an idea that's been around for a long time. In 2006 the Alberta Teachers' Association passed a motion at their spring conference saying that gay-straight alliances should be in all public schools. I will note that this was supported 100 per cent by all teachers at that meeting, whether they were from the Catholic system or the public system. So this idea has been around for a while, and it took us to get to this stage here, where opposition members and other members of the public and organizations out there in the community had been pressing the government on this issue and where these ideas of GSAs were discussed broadly in the community and the LGBTQ community wanted to have them instituted. You saw that at the discussions around Camp fYrefly communities, ISMSS at the University of Alberta, all over the place. This was an idea whose time had come.

So I'd like us to all recognize the fact that this was democracy in action. I am glad to see here that it looks like we're going to have 100 per cent support of all people in this Legislature on this issue when, remember, just eight months ago that was not the case. The majority of PC MLAs, at that time the complete opposition of the WRP, and the like were against this idea. Over the course of eight short months this was changed. Again, a red-letter day for not only the LGBTQ community, human rights, but democracy. I applaud all members of this august Assembly for going through the motion and the exercise.

I will say, too, that part of the success of what got us here were many members of the government side. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood spoke bravely about this issue through the summer. In the Bill 10 debates we saw the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and the hon. member for Edgemont, I believe, get up and speak against a bill that they felt was wrong. That is no easy task, no easy feat, to get up and not support your government's own bill. Hey, this is with a Premier who at the time was riding very high in the polls, who had instituted his own bill, his own made-in-Alberta solution, that apparently balanced rights. Yet they got up, and they said that they didn't believe this was right.

4:30

I encourage other MLAs on the government side. You can't do it all the time, but you can pick and choose on certain issues to get up and voice your opinion on what you believe in your heart of hearts to be the correct direction for Alberta's society. I think that, in the main, if you're on the side of progress, on the side of human rights, you will eventually be rewarded for those efforts and recognized for your courage.

Nevertheless, as my time is running short, I'll comment more fully on the actual nuts and bolts of the amendments put forward by the government. In the main, they seem to support the purpose and intent of Motion 503 as well as Bill 202.

I am interested to see how in particular the one section will work: when a staff member is not able to be found to run or organize a

gay-straight alliance, what will that process be, and how will it go forward and the like? You can envision some circumstances where this clause may be utilized by some schools or school systems to derail the process – derail the process – so I'm encouraged that the minister is thinking about that, how to ensure that, hopefully, a staff member is going to be able to lead this exercise. If not, what is going to look like an appropriate person to be there to support the kids, to ensure that the club is respected, to ensure that people have access to this great organization that can lead kids to having less worry, less angst, and less bullying in their lives?

In any event, Madam Chair, it's been a great honour to speak to this. I'd like to thank the government for bringing in this amendment, for listening to not only the opposition but to all Albertans, who have clearly moved on from the social wars of the past. I would encourage them to not be afraid of leading more often and leading in the direction of science, reason, common sense, and human rights. I think we will be rewarded for it as a province in terms of more reasonable legislation that supports an educated, modern society that understands the need for governments to lead.

In any event, thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, I rise with great interest in speaking to these amendments. It's an unprecedented series of events, I think, that we saw here on this first day of the spring session. I think it's a tribute to the evolution of an idea, where it is born from, I would say, hard work by activists right across the province, with many associations recognizing the psychological and social benefits of having GSAs in schools and then taking that concept and slowly working it through to today, where we are in fact building substantive law that really will, I think, help to establish the positive effects of GSAs right across the province.

I am grateful to have done some small part of that. Certainly, our New Democrat caucus has been working over many months, and I can see the amendments and some of the language that we brought forward over the last number of months in these amendments. Again, I'm grateful that we have an opportunity to perhaps pass them into legislation here in the very near future.

Now, I spoke to the hon. Education minister just briefly here this afternoon to look for some clarification on concerns that I have, talking to people about getting GSAs in their schools. Some of the concerns that I had certainly were as a teacher, that a teacher has responsibilities to students and responsibilities not just to curricular subject areas but also to extracurricular clubs and so forth. So a practical concern that was always in the back of my mind was: well, we could be all high and mighty here in this Chamber, advocating for GSAs, but a teacher somewhere in some school has to be the sponsoring person for that, right? That's the way schools function.

The principal has a part in that, too. I certainly saw some positive direction here in regard to these amendments to ensure that a principal has decision-making powers over creating and maintaining a GSA in a school. Then, of course, a co-operating teacher can put their name forward to sponsor these clubs without fear of retribution and/or other compromising potential situations, right? But I also would just like to venture further to say that in the interests of ensuring that a school board – a given school board might have some second thoughts about this legislation – would not be able to compromise the capacity of their staff to in fact sponsor these places, would not send, you know, a memo around to dissuade the staff from actually sponsoring a GSA in a school and thus try to somehow subvert the process as we move along.

Another concern that I had was in regard to private schools and charter schools and so forth. Again, it seems as though these amendments do compel those bodies to participate in this process – again, we've talked about this so much – but, I mean, it's not as though we are imposing the mandatory establishment of a GSA in a school. It's a process by which students and staff are looking for this to exist in a school, and then it's much more organic than top-down in regard to the establishment of a GSA although, certainly, when students and staff express their interest in doing so, then the authorities cannot step in the way of a GSA being established in the school.

Otherwise, another concern that I did have in regard to the amendments is just to, I think, ensure universality, as I said before, but also to ensure that the focus of the GSA not be watered down by, again, usually, school boards' maybe changing the definition of what it can be – right? – you know, like a social justice club or a culture club or something like that. I mean, this is a very specific intention with GSAs, to allow people to speak freely about concerns they have and to not just talk about problems but to celebrate diversity and sexual orientation in a very specific way. Again, it seems as though these amendments do define a GSA in a very specific way and do not have this watered-down process of turning it into a culture club or a political club or something of that nature.

Another issue that I had, just reflecting as a teacher, is to ensure that, yes, you are creating a positive place for GLBTTQ students to have a place to speak about issues that concern them but also for the larger positive educative effects that a GSA can have on the overall student population so that it is being accepted in the most positive way possible. The mere existence, I would say, Madam Chair, of a GSA in a school or the past existence of a GSA will serve as a moderating influence to help educate and create and foster an environment of acceptance amongst both the students and the staff and parents in a school.

4:40

You know, after all, to revert to first principles, why we have public education in the first place is to educate young people at that most influenceable age, and it's remarkable how fast they will learn if you set up a positive social justice framework that is equal and so forth and is reinforced by the administration all the way up to the provincial Legislature here. Then they know that it's the right thing to do and, in fact, will help to educate the larger population on issues of equality and social justice.

Madam Chair, I'm very interested in this whole afternoon and, really, the last few months that started it. I thank the member. I know exactly when this first entered the Chamber here, with the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo bringing this forward and then later the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, the tumultuous debates that we had last fall around this. But, most of all, it's the public that put out loud and clear that they want a greater degree of equality and social justice in their schools and outside of their schools. Each of the groups, both parent groups and student groups from the university, expertise from inside and outside the province of Alberta, pushed this forward. That's the way, truly, we make progress in our society, and I think that we all can be remembering this day for the rest of our legislative lives as being a positive one.

With that, the one issue that I do want to bring forward – and we've drafted here very quickly – in the spirit of co-operation, again, is a subamendment in regard to the staffing and so forth. You know, we'll talk about that more in very short order.

You know, when I was teaching, one of the very first GSAs that was established, to my knowledge, in Edmonton was at a school I was teaching at. It really had a positive effect among students and staff, not for people necessarily to participate but just knowing it

was there, right? We all have gone through high school, I think, most of us, anyway, and some of us were teaching and working in that environment, too. It's not always that you're accessing all of the benefits of a school at any given time, but just to know of the existence of a GSA in a school really is reassuring, and it creates an atmosphere of acceptance and normalization that I think we all need right now.

It's really important as well to know that when you make a gain in a society, when you make a societal gain to be more equal and just, it doesn't mean that you can let down your vigilance, and it doesn't mean that you can have some backsliding of people's attitudes towards equality and social justice. We know that so often the forces of prejudice and discrimination will come back if we're not vigilant, so establishing something like this in a public school setting and all provincial school settings is really good insurance, because we might think that we're all so progressive here in 2015, but you don't know where your society is going to be moving necessarily 10, 15, 20 years from now. We establish these institutions, these yardsticks, as in GSAs, and we are making a positive investment to probably ensure that the notion of equality and sexual equality between genders and for all sexuality will be ensured over time. Again, it's something that we can look forward to in a longer sense.

You know, I have spoken to lots of different people on this. I mean, it wasn't easy for certain groups and individuals and private schools and charter schools to deal with this. The most important thing was to reassure people that it's not as though they were having something imposed on them but, rather, that we were creating tools by which you can have a healthier society and a healthier population for students and for their own children to be looked after if they might be having some difficulties. As a therapeutic tool, certainly, GSAs are well recognized and recognized through many different cultures, through different socioeconomic groups, and so forth.

So in all ways, really, I'm pretty happy about this. Like I said, we just have a small amendment that we would like to bring forward to ensure the execution of this in the broadest possible way.

You know, I think the appetite for comprehensive GSA legislation is there amongst the general public. I think there are some people that might be dragging their feet a little bit, but as the hon. minister just mentioned to me in my conversation with him, you know, we make these laws here, and other groups and individuals will be compelled to follow, right? I mean, I think that for the most part it will be an easy process, a straightforward process, but certainly at the end of the day, we take the responsibility to create the laws and regulations that govern this province in regard to education. So this is not such a bad thing at all, really, taking responsibility like we are here today.

As the paper moves through the process, I think you've got a couple of things, Rachel, that you probably want to add on to this if you don't mind.

I thank you, Madam Chair, for your patience and for your chairpersonness.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thanks, Madam Chair. I just wanted to stand up and speak for a few minutes. As I indicated when I was speaking earlier, I was concerned about how quickly we're rushing this, and I said that I wanted to have the opportunity to listen to the Member for Edmonton-Centre. She and I had a delightful conversation back there. She reassured me that she is feeling – I guess that “seize the moment” was what she had said.

I guess the other thing that makes me feel a little better is that we've got Dr. Wells up in the gallery, so I have a little bit more security there. I asked about some of the other people when we were discussing this, like Murray Billett, and I understand that he's obviously . . .

Ms Blakeman: Suntanning. Sorry.

Mrs. Forsyth: . . . suntanning. He's here, but I would have loved to have the opportunity to be able to talk to him and, as I explained, some of the other gay friends and activists that I happen to know and cherish deeply.

You know, I'm not going to spend a lot of time. The Twitter world is abuzz, both pros and cons, actually, and there's nothing better than debating. There are some serious questions, Minister, on Twitter – and I don't know if you're following Twitter – that I think need to be answered. I can't answer the questions because I'm not the Education minister. They're talking about the dissolution of the Catholic schools with the bishop, et cetera, and I guess that's something that you're going to have to deal with as the minister. I don't have to deal with that.

I am going to listen to what my colleague has to say. I'm assuming that Dr. Wells has read these amendments and is comfortable with the amendments that he has seen. If he has anything else that he thinks needs to be added, we may have the opportunity to do that in a very short period of time. I understand that the leader of the fourth party has got some amendments that she's considering bringing forward.

I just want it in the House that we'll be supporting moving forward. As I said earlier, I was concerned about the time. I've been reassured by some people that I have a great deal of respect for, so we're going to be supporting this amendment, and I ask people in committee to support this particular amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

4:50

Ms Notley: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to this. I think I've already commented at some length on this change and on these changed amendments to Bill 10, so I won't take a lot of time.

Again, if you go back to what Bill 10 looked like when it was first brought in, I believe the plan was for there to be GSAs except where the administration or the school board didn't want them, and then the students could go to judicial review. Having been a lawyer, I know that going to judicial review is not exactly a user-friendly process even for people who've had many years of legal education. Then phase 2 was: “Okay. Well, we won't make it voluntary. They do have to happen, but it may have to happen on somebody else's property.” That sort of took a bad situation and almost made it worse, of course, because at that point we were dealing with the idea of sort of separate but equal. Of course, I don't think that was anybody's intention, but it certainly was the implication, and it was clearly a problem.

Now we have this set of amendments, and this set of amendments basically does what it needs to do. It guarantees the GSAs in any setting where the kids ask for them. It gets rid of 11.1. It deals with gender identity. It's good. It's a good package, so I'm happy with this set of amendments.

There are two issues, though, that I'd like to touch on very briefly, one through a proposed amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, are you moving your subamendment at this point?

Ms Notley: I was going to talk about one other thing before I got to the subamendment, but I'll be there in, like, 30 seconds.

The Deputy Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Notley: There is the section of these amendments that talks about: "Okay. Well, what if there's nobody available to lead and to be the liaison for this GSA?" That's a thoughtful section because there are a number of different circumstances in which that could happen. In small communities or in small schools definitely you could have occasions where the teachers themselves are simply not willing to participate in that role. It's good that we have section (4) in there the way it currently exists so that the minister has the capacity to come in and appoint someone else should no teachers be available. Maybe they're, you know, really exhausted because they've got 14 special-needs kids in their class of 40 – it's happened; oh, wait; no, it's happening – those kinds of things, so they choose not to volunteer for that particular project. We know that on a school-by-school basis the access to clubs varies tremendously between schools based on the workload of teachers. Section (4) as currently drafted is great because it provides a solution to that, and I'm happy to see that.

What I have, however, is an amendment because I'm afraid that section (4), without some quick correction, could end up being utilized in a way that was less positive, and I would like to fix that. So at this point what I'm going to do is propose an amendment and have this amendment distributed around for members of this Assembly to review.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if we could just pause until everybody receives a copy of this amendment. This will be known as a subamendment, and it is subamendment 1.

Hon. member, would you like to proceed?

Ms Notley: Thank you. Before I talk about the merits or the substance of this, let me just walk you through the amendment. Essentially, it's divided into two pieces. The first piece adds a section after section (4) in the part of your amendment which deals with the Education Act. The second piece adds a section (5) after section (4) in the part of your amendment that deals with the School Act. So it's basically doing the same thing in both settings. Really, what you're looking at is adding section (5) twice because you're dealing with the Education Act and the School Act.

What it's doing is that it's building on the analysis that began with the inclusion of section (4), understanding that in some circumstances the school liaisons might not be available because the teachers themselves are unavailable, so the minister appoints somebody. Great. No big problem with that.

The other option, though, could be the case where sometimes you have teachers who want to do this, but they are prohibited from doing it by their administration, particularly in the case where the administration or the board remains resistant to this change. Now, I think that some folks over there would acknowledge that even as we bring forward this legislation, there will be some boards and some school administrations that remain resistant to what we are proposing and what the government is proposing through its amendment.

One of the ways, with the current construction of this amendment, that that resistance might come to fruition is that the principal would be completely within his or her authority to discourage . . . [interjections] I'm not sure what you're saying. [interjections] Okay. Forget it. They want me to talk less and more and louder and longer but quieter, so I'm very confused.

An Hon. Member: Not longer.

Ms Notley: No. I got a "longer" over there, too, so what can I say?

Anyway, you can have those situations. The way it's currently constructed is that the administrator, using their authority as the employer, could construct a number of ways to tell teachers that they're not available, then inform the minister, and then the minister has to bring someone else in. Your first answer might be: "Well, why is that a problem? At least someone is coming in." True, but I think we can all agree that the best-case scenario is for the teacher, who is part of the school community, who is part of the administrative community, who has an ongoing relationship with the kids, to be the person who is the liaison. That's your best-case scenario.

Imagine a resistant school or school board seven and a half hours out of Edmonton, and suddenly they exercise their authority as the administrators to essentially create a lack of availability of teachers. Then the minister is appointing somebody who is flying in on a frigging plane to, say, High Level or something once a week in order to facilitate this gay-straight alliance, which (a) is costly and (b) not best practice because this person is not connected with the community and they're not connected with the schools and everybody else.

Now, that may happen nonetheless if none of the teachers want to do it. But what drives this amendment on my part comes from my own discussions with numerous teachers in the separate school division, in private schools, in charter schools who themselves would love to do this and who have tried to do this, who have been told by the administrations that they cannot do this. This section is geared towards giving those teachers the right to say, "You know what? I want to be the liaison officer" and to make sure that they get to be.

5:00

Now, there still may be those cases where no one wants to be the liaison officer. Then the minister is doing his thing, and he's picking his person, and off you go. But I just want to make sure that we don't create a situation where we're inviting those resistant boards to essentially create a lack of availability and then actually create a much larger obligation on the part of the Minister and the Ministry of Education to fund and transport these school liaison officers around the province. This is a way to avoid that. Again, it reflects best practice, because I do truly believe that the teachers who are a part of the community, who have relationships with the kids, who are interested in taking on this role, who want to take on this role are the ones who are best able to do it, and they're going to do the best job.

That's what this is geared to doing. It's a good-faith attempt to give you an opportunity to potentially work against any resistant boards or administrators that you may have in some small remaining corners of the province. That's what this is about. It's pretty simple, and it also deals with those many, many teachers whom I've spoken with over the last, well, years, actually, but since this particular issue arose. It allows for them to do it should they want to do it and to not have their principal tell them they can't do it, not have their principal assign them to other activities. You know, there are a variety of tools that the administration can use to create the status of nonavailability. So if a teacher is really supportive and wants to help the kids, let's just make sure they can. That's what this is about. That's what the amendment is for. So I hope that my colleagues will consider supporting this amendment to what . . .

Mr. Eggen: I'm voting for it. I'm in.

Ms Notley: My caucus member is voting for it, so that's cool. I've got one.

Anyway, I hope you'll consider it in the spirit with which it was submitted, which is an effort to make this better and to give the government more tools to deal with somewhat resistant boards and administrators.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on subamendment 1.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Madam Chair. As we try and get legislation right and we try and anticipate all of the possible permutations and outcomes, it's hard to imagine where things might go wrong and where we might be able to set it up in the beginning so as to have it move along in the direction that we had hoped.

I think this is a reasonable subamendment, and here's why. Clearly, the writers of the amendments that the minister has brought forward were trying to anticipate a situation where the staff said: not doing this. Then the changes here were going to empower the principal to get someone in place, a reasonable person, some of whom I've discussed here and, unfortunately, can't remember their names properly: Eileen from the Edmonton public school board.

But the other sides of that can also be true. One is the staff refusing to participate, but this is anticipating where the administration – could be a school board; could be the administration, including the principal – wants to make it so that the staff can't participate or they don't want that staff person to do it and makes it difficult. This subamendment is anticipating that particular circumstance, and I know the sponsoring member well enough to know that she's not going to bring this forward on one person talking about this. She's obviously heard it from more than one place, where things get manoeuvred so that a willing teacher or staff member is manoeuvred out of being able to help establish or lead or be the facilitator for a GSA.

I think that's fair. We've got the amendment on the one hand anticipating where staff refuse to participate; this is anticipating where the administration are manoeuvring it, and you have a willing staff member. It's saying that if we've got a willing staff member and they indicate they're willing to do this, the administration can't manoeuvre them out of it. Basically, if someone has indicated that they're interested, the route that's available here is that the principal would say: "Oh, well, sorry; nobody can do this. Would the minister please appoint someone?" This is saying: "No. If there's somebody in the school that has indicated that they want to do this, they should be accepted as the individual who is able to do this." I think that's fair. It's another way of anticipating – it's just coming at it from a slightly different direction. It's trying to ensure that the flow of this continues to go in the direction of being able to establish the GSAs with willing participants. That's why I'm suggesting that it's worth while to pursue this, to take advantage of people that might be in place but, you know, their administration doesn't really want it to happen, so they're manoeuvring it rather than the staff manoeuvring it.

I'm sorry; that sounded more complicated than it actually is. Is that okay? Did everybody understand what I was saying? Work with me, audience.

Mr. Hehr: You're in favour of the amendment. There you go

Ms Blakeman: Yes, thank you. Very clearly I'm in favour of the amendment.

But that's why. The amendments that have been brought forward by the minister already anticipate one scenario where members of a school may not wish to participate and are trying to sort of foul the

spark plugs, if I may use that analogy, and this is just another group of people trying to foul the same spark plugs. It's trying to say: "No, no, no. If there's someone that's available and they say that they want to do this, we're going to accept it." We're not going to let the administration get in the middle here and go, "No, you don't really want to do it," or "Gee, I've just assigned you to coach every single basketball game for the next century," and takes them out of commission so that they can't do it. This is saying that when there's a willing person there, we should take advantage of that and allow them to do it and not be rushing about saying: "No. I've made it so that it's impossible for them to be willing." God, I hope that clarified things.

Thank you very much. I do encourage my colleagues in the House, since we're all getting a bit weary, to pass this. Just think. We have a whole three more weeks just like this. I know how excited you all are. So let's pass this subamendment, and then we can get on to passing the amendment, and then, all things being willing, we could even just take a leap of faith here and pass it out at committee and go into third and pass it out of third. We could do that. We have enough time.

An Hon. Member: Let's do it.

Ms Blakeman: All right. Let's do it. Let's pass her subamendment. Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak on subamendment 1?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on subamendment 1 carried unanimously]

The Deputy Chair: That takes us back to amendment A6. Are there any other members who wish to speak on amendment A6?

Mr. Dirks: If there's no one else who wishes to speak, I just want to thank all members for their participation in this debate. I think we've reached a good place, where we can now move to the full bill for consideration. So thank you to everyone.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any others who wish to speak?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Chair: The question has been called.

[Motion on amendment A6 carried unanimously]

5:10

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other comments in Committee of the Whole on Bill 10?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question, then, on Bill 10, an Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that we rise and report Committee of the Whole.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

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

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports Bill 10 with some amendments. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? If you do, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Those opposed should say no. I hear no "no," so that is carried unanimously and so ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising to move third reading of Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, and it feels very good to say that right now.

I want to thank everyone for the support that we've gotten from all sides of the House today in making sure that this bill, Bill 10 in its new and improved form, is moving forward. I'm so proud today to be asking for the support of the House for this amended bill.

In November our government decided to put this bill on pause, and it was the right decision. We paused, and we listened, and we learned, and most importantly we heard from Albertans, and we have responded in the best way possible. We have responded in a collaborative way, with everyone working together, because our kids in this province deserve that collaboration when it comes to their safety, and they got it from all sides of this House today, and it is a wonderful, wonderful thing.

The work we have done here today makes three things very clear about GSAs: that, first of all, students who want a GSA in this province have every right to have a GSA, that that GSA has to be in their school, and that it has to be under the name of their choosing.

Mr. Speaker, it was more than a year and a half ago when I became associate minister of family and community safety, and LGBTQ issues were in my mandate. That's when I met Dr. Kristopher Wells, who is in our audience right now and who has been an amazing support to me on this issue. I went to my first GSA conference and heard from kids about the impact of GSAs, about the fact that for some kids in this province it is the only place that they can feel safe. That is why they're so important. A lot of these kids don't get that support at home. They will get that support in a GSA, and I'm so proud to be able to say that every child in this province who wants one can have one.

You know, Bill 10 in its entirety represents a huge step forward for LGBTQ rights in this province with respect to gay-straight alliances, and that is something that I have stood for in my career proudly. The bill enhances the Alberta Bill of Rights by ensuring that no Albertan will be subject to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The fact that we are able to talk about those things right now is a wonderful moment in this province in terms of social justice. It is a hugely important piece. It also enshrines the rights of parents to make informed decisions about their kids' education, and that right continues to be honoured in this bill because we believe that parental rights are extremely important and so do Albertans. Finally, Bill 10 makes an important correction by moving section 11.1 from the Human Rights Act into the School Act and, most importantly, removing sexual orientation from this clause because we needed to do that, and we're doing that.

As those in this room and across the province know, I have been a forceful advocate for LGBTQ citizens. I think it's a hugely important issue for us. I was proud to steward the removal of the preamble to the Marriage Act that states that marriage is between a man and a woman. We are a progressive, conservative province, and I am proud that we are, and this shows that we are.

The advancement of the GSA issue is something I take personal pride in because I know how important they are to kids. I know that when we have a province with GSAs, we have kids who feel better supported, better protected, and they learn that that is an important quality to have. They are our future leaders, and they will take that going forward. They will take that inclusiveness. They will take that understanding and acceptance going forward. They are our future leaders. We have to lead by example, and we're doing an amazing job of it here today, everyone in this House.

I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre because she has done a fantastic and forceful job on this issue. I think the conversations have been difficult but important ones, and I want to applaud her work on this issue because these are not easy things to talk about.

I want to take a special moment to thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo because when he brought Motion 503 forward not a lot of us were talking about GSAs. In fact, not a lot of us in this province knew what GSAs were. The fact that we began to talk about them in the place where we make legislation was a major step forward for us, and it is the reason we are here today.

I know that we still have work today going forward on all the inclusive issues in this province that we want to work on. I really hope that the spirit we captured today in terms of collaboration is something that we can embrace going forward, because Alberta kids deserve that, and they got that today. I am so proud, and I thank all of you for your efforts.

With that, I'd like to call the vote.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West has moved third reading of Bill 10. Are there any other speakers at third reading who wish to address the Assembly on this bill at this time? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, briefly.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Just really briefly because I'm getting the sense we're going to seize the moment here. I just wanted to conclude by saying how pleased and proud I am that the politicians in this Chamber have caught up to Albertans. I think that's important, and I thank everyone. I know that sometimes this is really difficult, and I do appreciate this because it's about creating a safe space for kids. In the end, it's about the kids.

5:20

I want to thank my mom for recognizing that this was an issue for kids in schools. As a principal and a teacher she got it, and she made sure that the kids at her school were safe and that the staff were safe. I appreciate the leadership that she showed me.

So thank you very much for everybody's co-operation. We still have work to do, and we will do it. It would be nice if we were as collegial as we've managed to be today, but I don't expect it. But thank you very much, everyone, for helping to move this along so that we have conclusion to it today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others?

Mr. Kang: Well, job well done. I want to congratulate everybody. This Chamber has made us all proud and has made all Albertans proud. I'm really proud of the work we have done today. Congratulations to the Premier, all the members.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any others?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-North West to close debate if you wish.

Ms Jansen: I'd like to call the question.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

The Speaker: So it was almost unanimous, and that's good. I would declare this one carried and so ordered, but I do want to make one small observation, and I'll be very brief. Today through your good work on Bill 10 you have demonstrated something rarely seen in politics anywhere. I've had the privilege of being in many Legislatures around the world and looking at and observing debate and so on. Rarely do you see the kind of spirit of co-operation that occurred in this Assembly today and probably what led up to it yesterday and days before, and that is the spirit that moves something forward for the greater good of all. I want to congratulate each one of you for that. With that, I'm proud to declare this particular bill carried and approved at third reading.

Congratulations, and let me recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a little late in the day here, and I would hereby move that we call it 6 o'clock and that this Assembly stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:23 p.m. to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	521
In Memoriam	
Mr. James E. "Bud" Miller, March 31, 1923, to January 23, 2015	521
Introduction of Visitors	521
Introduction of Guests	521
Ministerial Statements	
Gay-straight Alliances in Schools.....	523
Oral Question Period	
Fiscal Responsibility	526
Government Policies	527, 528
School Construction	527, 530
Women's Economic Equality.....	529
Dental Services in Northern Alberta.....	529
Bassano Health Centre.....	531
Full-day Kindergarten	531
Seniors' Facility Safety Upgrades	531
Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding	532
Eye Examinations for Children	532
Statement by the Speaker	
Commonwealth Day Message from the Queen, House Leaders' Agreement.....	534
Orders of the Day	535
Government Motions	
Evening Sittings	535
Adjournment of Spring Session.....	535
Committee Membership Changes.....	535
Transmittal of Estimates	535
Government Bills and Orders	
Third Reading	
Bill 10 An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children.....	536, 548
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 10 An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children.....	538

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