

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 19, 2007** **1:00 p.m.**  
 Date: 07/11/19  
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

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

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

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen who are here, we'll now proceed to the singing of our national anthem. We'll be led today by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Please participate in the language of your choice.

**Hon. Members:**

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

**Ms Evans:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's just an honour today to introduce a total of 74 of my constituents from Pine Street school. There are three classes that are attended by their teachers and group leaders, Heather Lockwood, Cheryl Hawryluk, and Pegi Brown, along with parent helpers Mrs. Jill Sharp, Mrs. Wendy Rudnew, Mrs. Pam Fair, Mrs. Violet Gernsheid, Mrs. Denise Conrad, and Tracy McFadden. I would ask our honoured guests to please rise and for this Assembly to wish them well.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm hoping that the group is in the gallery, and now they are. On behalf of my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition and the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview I'm absolutely delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 28 guests. We have 26 students and two teachers joining us from l'école Notre-Dame in the constituency of Edmonton-Riverview. They are led today by their teachers Mlle Magali Com and Mr. Paulin Larochelle. If the group could please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly a visiting delegation from Clara Tyner elementary school. Clara Tyner is another fine public school located in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. There are 27 visitors here today. As a matter of fact, they're here for

the week, and I certainly hope they find their week here informative and enjoyable. The group is led today by teacher Sandi James, and they're accompanied by Mr. Wayne Wheeler, a parent volunteer. They're in the public gallery, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to rise today and to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Breton home-school group. We have with us today seven students: Tanner Daudelin, Mikayla Maciborski, Brittney Ellis, Brady Ellis, Brendan Ellis, Brooke Aldous, and James Aldous. They're here today with their group leader, and they're sitting in the very front row of the public gallery. I would ask them all to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you the Engler family: Garry; his wife, Dawn; children Jonathan and Patricia; and their guests, Lana LaFrance and Andrew Vandenhaak. Let me just, if I may, say a few words about Reverend Engler. Reverend Engler is the head of pastoral care at the Sturgeon hospital. He has a great compassion for those dying and sick. He's been instrumental in my life and my family. He's a wonderful man, and he's blessed by the good Lord for his good work. Would they please rise – they're sitting in the front row – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two young Albertans seated in the gallery. They're Mandy Melnyk and Nathan Macklin. Mandy comes from a strong agricultural background and was born and raised in the Waskatenau area. She's a member of a long-standing family farm and has been active in organizing farmers at the grassroots level since she was just 14. Mandy is a passionate advocate for fair representation for rural Albertans.

Nathan Macklin is a young farmer in the Peace Country region. He's a descendant of one of the first homesteaders in the Grande Prairie and DeBolt areas. Nathan is active in the fight for farmers to retain their democratic control of the Canadian Wheat Board. He is also very active in the National Farmers' Union. Nathan is the NDP candidate in Dunvegan-Central Peace. I would now ask that both Nathan and Mandy rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly quite a number of guests seated in the members' gallery. If you could rise as I call your name. They are as follows: Phillip Crawford, Zenovia Wiwihar-Crawford, Breanna Crawford, Natalia Crawford, Aiden Crawford, Marek Crawford – we have most of the Crawfords here – Mellissa Brade, Amber Brade, Shannon Kusch, and Meagan Cote. These individuals have come all the way from Whitecourt to add

their voices to the growing number of Albertans who oppose the development of nuclear energy in this province. They're rising, and I would now ask that they receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. My first introduction is of a number of Edmontonians who joined the group outside the Legislature before noon today to protest nuclear development in this province. I believe they're seated in the members' gallery. They are Kate and Bryan Wrostok, Carl Beinert, Elizabeth Beinert, Zach Pentyluk, Kevin Wright, and Leila Darwish, who is with the Sierra Club prairie chapter. I will now ask the guests to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second set of guests, Mr. Speaker, is two federal candidates for the NDP here in Alberta. Ellen Parker, our federal NDP candidate for Crowfoot, is here today from Camrose to voice her concerns on the nuclear issue. Joining her is our federal candidate in Edmonton-St. Albert, Dave Burkhart. They are also seated in the members' gallery. We are honoured to have them here today. I will ask them to now rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It also gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and members of the Assembly a number of guests seated in the members' gallery. They are Cole Commander, Holden Commander, Bonnie Commander, Jensen Commander, Shannon Rosnau, Jeff Rosnau, Katty Rosnau, Ben Rosnau, and Noah Rosnau. These guests are also from Whitecourt and are here today to ask the government to oppose the development of nuclear energy in this province. I would now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

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

#### **Teachers' Unfunded Pension Liability**

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to inform the Assembly that this government has reached an agreement in principle with the Alberta Teachers' Association to address the teachers' unfunded pension liability. This agreement would resolve a serious issue that has hung over this province, its taxpayers, and its teachers for over half a century. Unresolved, this would have grown into a very mammoth \$45 billion problem for our children. Mr. Speaker, that simply is not acceptable. We will not leave this problem for the next generation.

As you can imagine, it was far from easy to resolve a difficult issue that has been around since the mid-1950s. I want to pay tribute to our Minister of Education and his negotiating team for the hard work they put into this on behalf of all Albertans. I must also thank a former member of this Assembly, ATA president Frank Bruseker, for his strong public support of this agreement. In my mandate letter to the minister last December I directed him to seek a very long-term solution that provides value for teachers, for students, and for taxpayers, and we have done that. This is a very positive, forward-looking move that meets the needs of a growing province.

Under the agreement the government of Alberta will assume the teachers' portion of the pre-1992 unfunded liability. In return,

Alberta will get five years of labour peace and the certainty that a massive, growing liability for taxpayers can now be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that this agreement benefits younger teachers, who have been carrying an unfair burden. In doing so, it really does address the issue of attracting the thousands of new teachers Alberta will need over the coming years.

This agreement must of course be ratified by Alberta's teachers, and all collective agreements must be in place by January 31, 2008. But I'm confident that Alberta teachers will see the advantage in an agreement that will allow the education community to focus on providing the best possible learning environment for Alberta's children. This government made it a priority to find a lasting solution to this problem, one that balances the interests of teachers, students, and taxpayers. This agreement in principle does that, providing the predictability and stability that our education system needs.

Mr. Speaker, it is another very important step in building the future of this province. Thank you so much.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Teachers play a vital role in Alberta's culture, progress, and prosperity, so I'm pleased that the government has reached a deal with Alberta's teachers, a tentative deal, to address the unfunded pension liability. It looks like a good deal, one that could make teaching far more attractive for Albertans considering the profession while reducing the financial burden on teachers currently serving the province. We're glad that the government has followed the lead of this Assembly, who in April passed Motion 503 urging the government to take action on this issue. My colleague the hon. Member for St. Albert introduced that motion. I think he deserves some credit for bringing this issue to the floor of the House, as does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who has been raising the issue in question period and debates for many months now.

We must remember, Mr. Speaker, that addressing this long-standing unfunded liability, which is a \$64 way of saying debt, is not some kind of gift to teachers. It's merely a long-overdue correction to a bad policy, as the Premier himself indicated, a bad policy, it should be noted, that this government has been aware of for almost 50 years. While this is a good deal for teachers, it remains to be seen whether this government can make it a good deal for taxpayers. The debt that the government has just assumed – the debt – should be paid off sooner rather than later. The longer it's allowed to fester, the greater the cost to all Albertans.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a note on trust and accountability, if I might. We're concerned that Alberta school boards, locally elected representatives of local people, local parents with a stake in this matter, were shut out of the process and had no voices as this deal was made. This follows a troubling pattern of disrespect from this government for our school boards. In 1995 they hamstrung school boards by taking over management of the education property tax. They failed to fund the settlement for school boards reached following the 2002 teachers' strike. Not the best way to celebrate a hundred years of service from our elected boards.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it seems like a good deal. Let's hope the government follows through by taking care of this incurred debt in a responsible and timely manner.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I do know that the leader of the third party would like to participate. We'll need unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and also to all members of the Assembly. It's good to see this Conservative government step up and take responsibility for a situation that they themselves made worse. The pay-as-you-go philosophy in place since the '50s was a problem, but since 1992 the situation worsened. In that time the deficit grew from \$742 million to \$6.3 billion. It is also important to remember that assuming this debt does not mean that this government has a plan to eliminate it, but taking this \$2.1 billion government-imposed burden off teachers is certainly the right thing to do. Young teachers will benefit, as will taxpayers.

While it's a good step, we also need assurance that the standards will not drop for class sizes, school closures, cuts to classrooms, and teachers' working conditions. Albertans need to know that their educational system will not decline during the five-year term of this deal.

Mr. Speaker, the government certainly messed up on housing and royalties, but I think they did the right thing here, and I'm prepared to congratulate them for it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner wishes to participate. We'll need the unanimous consent of the Assembly.

[Unanimous consent denied]

head: **Members' Statements**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Dr. Bill Gunter**  
**Dr. Stefan Bachu**  
**Dr. David Keith**

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is clearly recognized around the world as a good place for solutions-based research, and we have researchers in our midst who are taking us to new heights and accomplishments. As chair of the Alberta Research Council I'm pleased to note that three of Alberta's finest minds in research have been named as co-winners of the 2007 Nobel peace prize for their contributions to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change document on global warming. They are Dr. Bill Gunter, a distinguished research scientist with the Alberta Research Council's carbon and energy management business, Dr. Stefan Bachu, senior geoscience adviser with Alberta Geological Survey, and Dr. David Keith, director of the ISEEE energy and environmental systems group at the University of Calgary.

These gentlemen were already highly esteemed international scientists whose expertise was being sought around the world. This outstanding tribute through the Nobel peace prize recognizes their efforts to build and disseminate greater knowledge, in particular on the capture and storage of carbon dioxide in suitable geologic formations. This is of immense importance to Alberta as part of a practical and achievable solution to climate change. Each and every one of these individuals and the organizations that support them, including the Alberta government, and all Albertans can be extremely proud of the work done to enhance world-class interdisciplinary research, innovation, and education focused on a cleaner environment, a responsible energy industry, and a suitable economy.

Mr. Speaker, the 2007 Nobel peace prize is further recognition that Alberta is home to world-class research talent and an unparalleled research system built on partnerships among government, universities, research organizations, and industry.

Thank you.

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

1:20 **Adoption Awareness Week**

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to recognize Adoption Awareness Week, running from November 19 to 25. Traditionally, the third week of November is a time when we stop and celebrate the many dedicated families who have opened up their lives to a child through adoption. It's a time when we ask families to think about the many children who are still waiting here in our province for committed, nurturing families and permanent homes.

Alberta has a number of successes to celebrate during this year's Adoption Awareness Week. We are the only province that has developed a dedicated website to profile children waiting for adoptive families. This year we celebrate our 24th anniversary working in partnership with CTV television on the Wednesday's Child series, the series that has proven to be a very successful way to find the right home for Alberta children hoping to be adopted. Last year Children's Services found homes through adoption and private guardianship for 471 children who were formerly in government care. In the first half of this year, I'm pleased to say, we've seen a 20 per cent increase in the number of children placed with new families.

Today there are about 165 amazing children who are still waiting to be matched with a loving, caring family of their own. To find out more about adopting a child in Alberta, families can tune in to the Wednesday's Child program, airing each Wednesday on CTV, log onto Alberta's adoption website at [www.adoptionalberta.gov.ab.ca](http://www.adoptionalberta.gov.ab.ca), or simply pick up the phone and call 780-422-2634.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Riverdale Net Zero Energy House**

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday I joined over 1,100 interested Edmontonians in Riverdale, one of the many fine communities in Edmonton-Gold Bar, for a tour of one of Alberta's first four net zero energy homes. The duplex located 9926-87th Street combines ultra energy-efficient design with three solar energy systems to produce more energy than it consumes over the course of a year. The Riverdale net zero energy house is the most northern one under construction in Canada and will be completed in February. I was surprised to learn that it is possible here in Edmonton's cold, northerly climate for a home to generate all its own heat and light.

On the tour we saw installed solar heating and solar-panelled power systems, high performance windows, partially insulated walls, other insulation details, very efficient wall construction, air tightness, and heat recovery water and ventilation. The technologies used in this house are all off the shelf. The way they are designed and integrated into the house to achieve the net zero energy goal is new.

We need to recognize the financial contributions to this project by both Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Solar Energy Society of Canada, northern Alberta chapter. There are over 40 Alberta specialists on the Riverdale net zero house project. The core project team consists of Peter Amerongen, Andy Smith, and Gordon Howell. This house, which is healthy, sustainable, zero annual energy costs, is the house of the future. It is here now. The public interest in the project is noteworthy.

I would like to thank all those who organized Saturday's event and encourage all hon. members of this Assembly to please visit this

house in Riverdale. For more information and tours, please e-mail [info@riverdalenetzero.ca](mailto:info@riverdalenetzero.ca).

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Oil Sands Multistakeholder Consultation

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On July 7 of this year the report and recommendations of the Oil Sands Multi-Stakeholder Committee and panel released its recommendations to the government of Alberta. This is one of the most important public consultations undertaken in years, and the Alberta government has not yet responded to them. There seems to be a reluctance to publicly address these critical issues.

What is the government of Alberta's response to the recommendations on environmental, social, economic, and governance issues related to oil sands development? The consistent message from most presenters to the consultation was that the pace and scope of development is irresponsible, the social and health impact unacceptable, environmental risks too high, especially the massive tailings ponds, and the cumulative environmental impact not adequately understood. Industry is also asking what's going on. They invested many hours in the mining liability management program over several years. The proposal on who is liable for oil sands risks is still not out for public consultation. What are we hiding from?

Recently appearing on an Alberta Environment website is the index of reclamation and a clear indication that the government has changed the definition of reclamation. Reclamation means that a site has been cleaned up and restored to equivalent land use. Here it appears that Alberta Environment has redefined reclamation as any activity on a site that begins the process of reclamation.

In the face of mounting criticism, both within the country and in the international community, it appears that this government will do anything to give the impression: everything is fine; just trust us.

The multistakeholder committee and panel were not able to reach consensus on 26 recommendations. Most of the recommendations they were unable to reach agreement on relate to the protection of social supports and the environment, including interim, precautionary-based emissions and environmental thresholds, real greenhouse gas targets, and a limit on the cumulative amount of land that can be disturbed at any one time in each of the oil sands areas.

Albertans are increasingly . . . [Dr. Swann's speaking time expired]

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

### Registered Apprenticeship Program

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to expose an Alberta trades top secret, the registered apprenticeship program, RAP. A week ago I attended a celebration to recognize the apprentice scholarship recipients from around the province.

Industry and government work together to provide on-the-job trades experience. Students can start in RAP as early as grade 10. The work earns them on-the-job experience through their apprenticeship along with credits toward high school diplomas. When apprentices graduate from high school and start their new first period of in-class training, they are eligible to receive \$700. They receive the remaining \$300 when they start the second period of in-class training.

The registered apprenticeship program 2007 scholarships of \$1,000 have been awarded to 384 high school graduates participating in the program. Alberta government partners with industry to

fund the annual \$1,000 scholarship. The RAP scholarships are an excellent way to promote trades study in Alberta. As more and more young people explore these challenging hands-on careers, these young people have successfully demonstrated both high academic skills and employability skills as part of RAP.

Strengthening postsecondary education is part of our government's plan to secure Alberta's future in building our communities, greening our growth, and creating opportunity. Currently Alberta has 47,000 registered apprentices in 51 designated trades and six designated occupations. On behalf of the youth and parents in my constituency I want to thank the participating companies and the government for investing the time, effort, and funding.

### Curb the Danger Impaired Driver Program

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to tell all members of this Assembly about a very successful program in Edmonton. Over and over again as I travelled the province as chair of the Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force, we heard about the importance of every Albertan getting involved to help make their streets safer.

Curb the danger is a process for curbing impaired driving through community involvement which was initiated by the Edmonton Police Service in October of 2006. This unbelievable and successful program urges road users of Edmonton to report suspected impaired drivers to the 911 emergency operators. Patrol and other members try and intercept these reported drivers. When an interception is not possible and a plate information matching the description of the vehicle, a letter is sent to the registered owner informing them of the incident.

Mr. Speaker, not only does curb the danger target impaired drivers, but it has been able to obtain stolen vehicles, suspended drivers, drivers without insurance, warrants, and drivers without valid licences. Since the program began, EPS has received 7,842 calls from citizens reporting suspected impaired drivers on Edmonton streets. Of the total, police pulled over 2,403, which led to 743 impaired charges and 148 24-hour suspensions. An additional 2,325 registered owners received letters in the mail, an indication that their driving habits were reported to the police.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, about the wonderful job this program does and would like to acknowledge one of our own, Barney Stevens, who is a security guard. Thanks to Barney, EPS, and Edmontonians who have participated in a true example of community policing.

1:30

### Oral Question Period

head:

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

### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Instead of solving the affordable housing crisis, the Conservatives have gone and turned it into a money pit, another black hole down which they pour your tax dollars and mine without anything of lasting value to show for it. Their rent supplement program is now \$10 million over budget and climbing. To the Premier: what excuse does he have for the program going so far over budget? And we're only halfway through the fiscal year.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, in the spring I told this Assembly that for any people that are either moving to the province of Alberta from other jurisdictions or Albertans that are presently seeking housing on their own, we would be there to assist those families and their

children to find affordable housing and at the same time invest in affordable housing, working with the municipalities so that we would have more units available for families that continue to move to this province. That is our goal. We're meeting those obligations. It just shows that there are so many people coming to the province to seek opportunity here.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Conservatives' rent supplement program subsidizes landlords. The truth is that the Conservatives show their true colours every day. Their rent supplement program is not about protecting tenants, not about supporting people; it's about doing whatever it takes to make sure landlords can charge whatever they want, and if Joe Tenant can't pay, Joe Government will. When is the Premier going to check his good landlord/bad renter ideology at the door, do the right thing, and bring in a temporary rent cap?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, don't ever get baffled by the statement "temporary rent cap." There is no such thing as a temporary rent cap. You can speak to Premiers from one corner of this country to another. That's how originally some of them got caught up in this temporary rent cap. Temporary in some of those provinces is over 10 years. Temporary, quite frankly, has significantly reduced the number of available units for housing and at the same time put serious impediments on constantly refurbishing rental units in those particular provinces. And that's a proven fact.

**Mr. Taylor:** This is so important, and the results of not having a home can be devastating. A new report on youth homelessness from the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo reveals that some homeless youth in that area are so desperate that they are trading sexual favours for a place to sleep. Fort McMurray has been pleading for help from the province for years to deal with growth pressures, and this, Mr. Speaker, is the government's answer. To the Premier. No more rhetoric; no more saying you're doing a job, because you're not. What are you going to do right now to fix the housing problems in Fort McMurray so children don't have to trade sex for shelter?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I will discount that kind of an opening statement. But let's face it – I don't know where he was this spring. He should know that this Assembly made a very important decision, and that is that we invested \$396 million into the community of Fort McMurray to deal with the critical housing issue, water and sewer treatment in the community of Fort McMurray. We've also put together a team that's moving the infrastructure dollars as quickly as possible. We've made huge, huge advancements in the community of Fort McMurray that he is not even aware of.

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

#### Department of Energy Consultant

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Energy has a contract with Mana Energy Group Limited. The president of this company is Murray A. Nelson. The company charges \$500 per hour for professional services to the Department of Energy, and they have invoiced taxpayers over \$84,000 for a total of 160 hours of service since June. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. What services does this company provide to the government for \$500 per hour?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The engagement of professionals outside of the department for issues such as the impending set-up of the new Energy Resources Conservation Board and Alberta utilities commission would be some of the work that's contracted outside.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what are the qualifications of this company to provide the service to your department for \$500 per hour?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be my understanding that the individual that's being spoken about is indeed very, very knowledgeable with respect to the industry and the utilities system in the province of Alberta. I believe that during this transition period that is taking place, we will require the services of experts such as this.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Was this contract – this contract here – tendered? Again to the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that I really understood the question. He asked me if that contract was tendered to me. I would suggest it was not tendered to me.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. I'm certain that taxpayers are interested in how they can get themselves one of these \$500 per hour government jobs for giving advice.

Now, my next question, and perhaps the hon. minister can understand this one. Who in the Department of Energy authorized the contract?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of contracts, of course, that are out. Not only the Department of Energy but I think that a number of government departments would look outside of government for expertise with respect to the work that we have to do on behalf of Albertans. Most certainly, the work that will be provided on behalf of Albertans by this particular individual: I think the proof of that will come in the conclusion of the work that he'll be doing.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is to the Premier. Why does the government of Alberta pay \$500 per hour for this company and this man's advice when you reject free advice from Joe Anglin of the Lavesta group regarding the electricity measures?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know who the hon. member is referring to. He may want to bring that issue and ask the Minister of Energy that question. I don't know who he's referring to.

**Mr. MacDonald:** That doesn't surprise me, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Energy. For \$500 per hour this company

must provide a great service for Albertans. Will the minister table in this house the details of the contract, what work was done, what benefits Albertans received, and so forth? Or was this contract one of those secret deals this government is so famous for?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, you know, the work that's ongoing with respect to the transition from the EUB to two new regulators in the province of Alberta is extremely important for Albertans. At an appropriate time we will have two new regulators. We will do it right. In order to get it right for Albertans, we do require the services of outside experts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Affordable Housing

(continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Ordinary Alberta families are being hurt by this mismanagement of housing by this Conservative government. Thousands of low-income renters are just a paycheck away from being without a home. The government's own audit of the homelessness and eviction prevention fund found that rental arrears were the cause of half of the claims to the fund, but instead of putting in rent guidelines to stop skyrocketing rents, the government is throwing money at the problem, and it's ending up in the pockets of landlords. To the Premier: if you're going to spend \$21 million over eight months on this program, how many more millions of dollars will you dump into this black hole in the next year?

1:40

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to Alberta families that are in need of assistance. But I just want to go back to this other word that the opposition uses. The Liberals use temporary. The third party uses guidelines. Just give us guidelines. Don't legislate; just put in guidelines. Again, a misuse of words. You can't put in a guideline. If you want to put in rent controls, you actually legislate. You don't say that these are guidelines. That's another way of trying to kind of sneak this in, saying it won't harm the housing industry, keep down future construction, by using the word "guideline."

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's curious because we used the term that was used by the government's own task force on housing and homelessness. The term that they used was guideline, Mr. Premier.

But you can't get out of the question that easily. You know, it's important that this government recognizes that people are losing their homes because they won't stand up to landlords. To the Premier: is it because you want donations from big landlords for the Conservative Party that you won't take action?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, again, changing the questioning because I guess I struck a nerve with him with respect to guidelines. Let's be perfectly frank. Putting in legislative rent controls would only reduce the number of available units constructed in the province of Alberta.

**Mr. Martin:** Oh, they're really building them now.

**Mr. Stelmach:** By the way, one of the hon. members says that

they're really building them now. Well, quite frankly, yes. Individual housing starts for rental units are up. He should know the statistics out of Edmonton because they're quite phenomenal. In that short period of time many more built under this policy than the zero that would have been built under his policy.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Premier is forgetting that most of the units that are now being built are condominiums and that condominiumization of rental units is proceeding faster than new ones are being built. If you really want to increase the supply of rental units, Mr. Premier, why don't you do something about the condominiumization that's taking place in this province instead of ignoring the problem?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, last spring we did pass legislation in the House to do that, and secondly . . . [interjection] I don't know if truth hurts them or what. By the way, a teacher – a teacher – that I know would want some kind of behaviour in the classroom is the one that's actually abusing the rules of this House.

Mr. Speaker, the policy we have has been implemented, and it's working well for Albertans. We see the number of rental units increase. We also see the cost of housing beginning to level off. We're seeing housing becoming more affordable. The policy is working, and that policy is working within just a few short months.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Health Care Accessibility

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The success of any society is often judged by its efficiency in providing goods and services. How long do you have to wait? Is there good customer service? These are questions asked. Public and private services are subject to the same questions. Our Alberta health care is a public and private mix. Albertans often have to wait months for health procedures. Health suffers. To even see a doctor or to take a child to a clinic, employees often lose a full day's work. What a waste to them, the economy. What a frustration. There is a shortage of doctors, but why the wait times? My question is to the minister of health. The hip and knee replacement program was a great success in cutting wait times. When will this team approach to health . . .

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member was going to ask when the hip and bone program is going to be extended across the province. I can tell you that we've worked with the bone and joint institute to look at their process. We've extended financial resources to them so that they continue their work, and one of the most important things that can come out of that process is to use it as a model in other areas of health care, where multidisciplinary teams of both health care professionals and those that support them can work with individual Albertans to make the most effective use of the resources, which results in a reduction of the time that people have to wait.

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you. To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: how soon will a comprehensive electronic health card be in place for all Albertans, one that will save paperwork and wasted time for patients and staff in clinics and hospitals?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been considerable debate and discussion around the concept of an electronic health card, or so-called smart card. We haven't gone in that direction in the province. We've gone in the direction of an electronic health record which can be accessed by appropriate health care professionals. We expect to have that electronic health record fully operational in 2008 so that most, if not all, pharmaceuticals will be recorded on the record, the electronic diagnostic testing will be on the record, and most Albertans will be on an electronic health record by the end of 2008.

**Mr. Backs:** A second supplementary question to the minister of health: Mr. Minister, what penalties for clinics for excessive wait times has or will your department attach to fee payments for publicly funded procedures, and are there other measures, private or public, planned to improve service?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not going in the direction of penalizing, at least certainly not at this point in time. Instead, what we're trying to do is to create the environment or the climate in which clinics can adopt best practices, can use the benefit of health care professionals' training and expertise to their full value, working in the context of primary care networks, for example, bringing the full value of all health professionals to the table. At this point in time it wouldn't be appropriate to use a penalizing process because there's such a high level of integration between the various roles that are played. But it's very important to take the learnings from the bone and joint institute, to extrapolate that to other clinics and other processes and use health care professionals to the best of their training and expertise.

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

#### **Teachers' Unfunded Pension Liability**

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For some 50 years Alberta's teachers, governments of the day, and Alberta's taxpayers were strapped with the unfunded pension liability, which was only growing, until this Premier made an undertaking to address this issue. Promise made; promise delivered. The ATA and the minister and the Premier should be commended on it. However, to the Minister of Education: what will the actual benefit be to an average Alberta teacher in his take-home pay, having ratified this agreement?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that first of all it needs to be pointed out that as a result of our initiative in this spring's budget, since September 1 of 2007 we have been picking up the 3.1 per cent contribution of teachers, which will expire at the end of December, so the immediate impact will not be seen. There will be a retroactive 3 per cent pay increase to September 1, and then there will be the lump-sum payment at the end of April, and then, going forward, there would be the ongoing wage increases.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that case what will the benefit be to an average Alberta taxpayer from this expenditure?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think there are a number of

benefits to Alberta taxpayers. I don't know how you put a number on students being in class for five consecutive years without labour agreement. Secondly, I think it's also fair to say that the ATA and the teachers have come to the table. They have accepted a 3 per cent wage increase for the current fiscal year that we're in, and that obviously is a lesser amount than has been accepted by other public-sector unions. I think the long-term benefit, though, on this deal is that it's good for parents, it's good for teachers, but it's especially good for students of Alberta.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Even though pension funding right now is not flowing through school boards, some are asking why schools boards were not involved in this negotiation. Can you enlighten us on that?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it needs to be pointed out that I was not involved in the negotiations as the minister, nor was the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association involved. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, we wanted to take politics out of the negotiations, and I think the results that we announced last Thursday show that we succeeded in taking politics out. Now, I know the opposition wants to make a political issue out of it, but we decided – we had a strong negotiating team led by the Deputy Minister of Education. The ATA came to the table with the intention of also resolving this issue, and unlike the Liberals, who will continually plant the same tree and expect to get different fruit from it, we took a different approach.

#### **1:50 Affordable Housing for AISH Recipients**

**Ms Pastoor:** Mr. Speaker, finding an affordable place to live remains a crisis in this province. People with full-time jobs can barely afford the rent on a one-bedroom apartment. For residents whose only income is \$1,050 a month, which is an AISH cheque, finding a place is almost impossible. A studio apartment is \$800 a month. To the minister of housing: do you expect people to live like this? Substandard basement suites are not the answer. What else can this minister do to get Alberta through this crisis? Whatever it is that's been happening up to now, it isn't working.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last spring, when we initiated the housing task force committee, that housing task force brought forward recommendations. One of the recommendations was the homeless and eviction prevention fund, the recommendation being for \$7 million to address those exact issues. We have presently served 21,000 individuals under that program, trying to assist those individuals in time of need.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. It's actually helping the landlords.

To the minister of seniors. Band-aid measures this government has put in place in the spring haven't solved the affordable housing crisis. How are Albertans on AISH supposed to afford medication, food supplies, and equipment when most of it, 70 to 80 per cent, is spent on their rent?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to those on AISH we do take that seriously in the sense that we have raised AISH rates over

the last three years. We continue to work towards that obligation of looking at how we can improve that going forward. We provide a full complement of health benefits to those on AISH. We've also tried to work to make it far more flexible for them if they are employed, that a greater amount of their income would be exempt from any clawbacks. We've also tried to make sure that we're working on more flexible employment initiatives for those with disabilities.

**Ms Pastoor:** I agree with the minister. There have been some good changes made. However, most of these people really cannot work at a full-time job. Will the minister increase AISH payments to reflect rent increases, or is the government finally going to implement temporary rent caps, as recommended by your own housing task force? Mr. Minister, temporary can be temporary if this government has the political will to make it so.

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, those on AISH receive a range of benefits. As we've said, there has been a very substantive increase over the last two, three years in AISH payments. We are going to see – and we're working towards that – that those payments do increase. We acknowledge that there are increases in living costs but have also tried to make sure that there are more flexible arrangements for employment. Acknowledging that they aren't always capable of working on a full-time basis, how do you ensure that you can work with employers in our system to ensure that to whatever flexible arrangements they can, they have opportunities to be included in work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

#### **Teachers' Unfunded Pension Liability** (continued)

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An Alberta education is ranked as one of the very best in the world. It takes many people and a lot of hard work to ensure that our students receive the best education possible, so it's important that we work together to benefit our students. Throughout the discussion and announcement of the agreement in principle to deal with the pre-1992 teachers' portion of the unfunded liability, the focus has been on teachers and government reaching a five-year agreement, but the students ultimately are the reason we are doing this. My question to the Minister of Education is: what's required to finalize this proposed agreement?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is correct that it is a memorandum of agreement, and in order for it to be finalized, the 62 school boards and 62 ATA locals across the province have been given until January 31 to resolve this particular issue and sign contracts. I think it is important to point out that there are issues at the local level that school boards and ATA locals may want to include in the agreement, and we've given them the opportunity to do so.

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this weekend during discussions with some of my constituents this question kept arising, so I need to ask the Minister of Education what the answer is. Does this agreement mean that the government is now bargaining provincially?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. This is a one-

off situation, and when this particular contract expires at the end of August 2012, we will resume the normal bargaining that exists today. I think it's fair to say that during the course of the negotiations there was a fair bit of give-and-take on both parts, and the ATA felt that it was in their best interests for their members to have labour peace in exchange for the assumption of the unfunded liability. That's the way this particular negotiation worked out, but we will revert in 2012 to the normal process.

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** That's all. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years this government has managed to systematically erode the powers vested in publicly elected school boards across the province. Their exclusion from unfunded pension liability negotiation is simply another example of this. Why did the government choose to exclude school boards throughout these negotiations when they are essential to the agreement's implementation, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member would have been listening, he would have heard the answer earlier. As I said to the very fine question from the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, the Minister of Education and the head of the ATA were also not involved in the negotiations because we have embarked on several occasions in the past which have not been successful, and our desire this time was to attain success. We put the two parties at the table that . . .

**Mr. Chase:** The Education minister gets in the way of successful bargaining.

**Mr. Liepert:** You know, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity wouldn't be spending so much time in his basement thinking about all these smart-aleck sayings that we hear from him every day, he might have been at the School Boards Association reception last night and heard the very, very positive response to this agreement.

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

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If one school board dissents, this agreement in principle will collapse. That's the way I understand it. This is to the minister. Given that they were just last week given the specifics, why has the government given the board such an immense responsibility in such a tight time frame to ratify the agreement? Why so tight, Mr. Minister? It's a very important agreement.

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this hon. member was at the reception last night, and if he would have been talking to the school trustees, as I was – and I've certainly been talking to my colleagues, who have been around the province this past weekend talking to teachers, talking to school board officials. I would say that there is a high degree of satisfaction with what has been put on the table. The school board trustees are saying to me that the fact that they now have the length of the contract, the funding in place, and the fact that they'll have labour peace for five years can now allow them to sign a contract with their ATA locals, and they can focus on educating students and not be negotiating contracts.



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

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the government has done with this latest agreement is create a two-tier bargaining model across Alberta, where salary is negotiated provincially but things like working conditions are negotiated locally. To the Minister of Education: since the government is systematically eroding the autonomous powers of school boards, what future role does this government expect them to play? What is their role going to be? What are they going to do in the future, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the Liberal opposition has looked long and hard and sometime this morning has finally found something that they think is negative about this absolutely incredible deal for all Albertans. I would just suggest that all of the feedback we have received has been very positive, and unlike the hon. Member for St. Albert I'm optimistic that we're going to have labour peace in this province for the next five years and students are going to be in the classroom getting educated, where they belong.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

#### 2:00 **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was a teacher in my previous life. It is one of the most meaningful and noble of all professions, and its role is second only to parents in producing a successful next generation. I've seen many, some of the best, teachers, many young and energetic teachers, leave the profession to pursue other interests. To the Minister of Education: given that recruitment and retention are critical to the future of this province and our students, does the minister have information or statistics to indicate the significance of this trend or its impact on the profession, the school system, and our students?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that some 30 per cent of teachers within five years exit the profession. It's hard to put a number or a specific percentage on why a particular teacher leaves, but clearly in my meetings with teachers across the province in the last 11 months and especially with those who are new to the profession, they have indicated to me that paying for a liability that they had no part in creating was something that they felt was unfair. We have fixed that.

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the new pension deal will attract and retain more teachers, and I think many Albertans agree with that, but proof and evidence are important. Does the minister have evidence that would show that the recent agreement for Alberta taxpayers to assume \$2 billion of the unfunded liability will solve the recruitment and retention issue?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, I guess, Mr. Speaker, only time will tell. There are a number of factors as to why teachers leave the profession, and some of them we have little or no control over. However, this is one that we clearly have control over, and we've taken action. Teachers will have the 3.1 per cent no longer taken off their paycheques. In addition to that, they will have a salary based on the weekly earnings index for the next four years and 3 per cent this year. I believe it will keep the majority of new teachers in the profession for much longer than in the past.

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The pension plan liability issue has been resolved, but it's not a magic bullet for retention and attraction of professionals. Is the government considering other options to ensure that the best teachers stay in the profession for our students?

**Mr. Liepert:** One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that I think we need to do is recognition. Last night at the School Boards Association opening ceremonies they presented what was called the Edwin Parr award, and it is for first-year teachers. There were some seven recipients last year, and for those members in the House who were in attendance, I think everyone who was there will say how literally blown away we were with the quality of these young teachers. I believe that recognition either through such awards as the Edwin Parr award or our own excellence in teaching award – I would strongly encourage all members to nominate teachers in their constituencies for what is a very well received recognition of their work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### **Nuclear Power**

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The rumours around the plans to build nuclear power plants in Alberta are starting to spin out of control. The Alberta New Democrat caucus and most Albertans have grave concerns about these proposals and would welcome the opportunity for the government to set the record straight here and now. The Conservatives, and the Liberals, too, for that matter, have had closed-door meetings with Energy Alberta. We believe, as do hundreds of Albertans that met today on the steps of the Legislature, that this issue is too important to ram through in secrecy. To the Minister of Energy: will the minister kindly describe the details of their meetings with Energy Alberta, with particular emphasis on why you think this province would need nuclear power in the first place . . .

**The Speaker:** We have a 45-second rule. That's about a minute and something else.  
The hon. minister.

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the development of nuclear energy in the province of Alberta most certainly there is an application that's in front of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, and that's the proper place for it to be. Under our Constitution in Canada the federal government reserves a constitutional right to deal with these issues, and we respect that. Also, there will be at an appropriate time hearings that would take place and public consultation. You can rest assured that the Alberta government on behalf of the citizens of Alberta will be very active in that issue.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that these negotiations have obviously progressed along to a fairly advanced stage just with the amount of nuclear material we've been receiving around the province, yet we've had no position from the government as to their position on nuclear energy in general. So, Mr. Minister, please set the record straight once and for all. Does this government support a nuclear-free Alberta, or do they support building nuclear power plants on our soil?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, again, you know, it's easy if you want to just try to phrase a question that would put any individual in a corner. However, what I would suggest is that what will happen in Alberta, as may not be going to be done by the NDs, is that nuclear energy would be considered in the broader context of our comprehensive energy strategy. We are at this point neither a proponent of nor a detractor from any nuclear proposition in the province.

**Mr. Eggen:** You know, that's funny, Mr. Speaker, because I look at the 20-year plan for electricity, for example, in this province: no mention of nuclear energy. Suddenly here it is, popping up on the floor of the Legislature. Albertans deserve to know what's going on in the open in terms of nuclear power in this province. Why is the government pursuing this dangerous and costly nuclear route instead of investing in proven sustainable solutions such as conservation, wind, solar, and geothermal energy? The billions that it would cost to build and then clean up a nuclear plant afterwards could be invested in a much wiser fashion.

**Mr. Knight:** You know, again, Mr. Speaker, similar to some of the questions that we were dealing with last week, I can repeat the answer any number of times that the member opposite would like. We are neither a proponent of nor a detractor from any nuclear project in the province of Alberta. The mandate for this is clearly at the federal level. Clearly, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission will deal with it in a timely manner, and we as the government of Alberta will be involved in the process.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also for the Minister of Energy. Today concerned citizens from across Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario gathered on the steps of the Legislature to express their deep concerns about the prospect of nuclear power plants close to their homes and families. While companies are filing applications and scouting locations, citizens feel ignored. These people and all Albertans concerned over the prospect of nuclear power were promised public consultations with full disclosure. Mr. Minister, is it your intent to push through Bill 46 to limit public participation in nuclear energy discussions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** I see you refuse to answer, Mr. Minister.  
Citizens have pressing questions about health, safety, environmental and economic impacts. The MLA for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne has been heard to say that it's not a question of if but when for nuclear power in the Whitecourt area. Tell me, Mr. Minister: is this the position of the Alberta government? When, not if, on nuclear power?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, to clarify the first issue, number one, I believe that if you read the Order Paper, Bill 46 appears there at some point, so I think that wasn't appropriate.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the answer to the second question, what another member might or might not say out in public is certainly not a concern for me.

I'll repeat the answer again. The government of the province of Alberta is neither a proponent of nor a detractor from any nuclear facility in the province of Alberta. It's being handled appropriately by a federal government agency.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is the government's duty to make balanced decisions, decisions that are made in the best interests of the people of Alberta and all future generations. Given the massive cost overruns of nuclear power in Ontario, will the minister commit here and now that no public funds and no public liability will be assumed to support the nuclear industry in Alberta?

2:10

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, you know, it's interesting when we get into these types of discussions. The answer to that question, I think very clearly, lies in the fact that it would be my observation that in Canada Alberta is the only jurisdiction that has no public money in the utility system currently, no debt and no public money.

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

### Winter Emergency Shelters

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our province continues to experience strong economic growth, and along with that come a number of social needs for vulnerable Albertans. I know from past experience that with winter fast approaching, a number of homeless individuals in Calgary and throughout the province will require emergency shelter. My first question is to the Associate Minister of Affordable Housing and Urban Development. What is the status of the winter emergency shelters in our province?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you. We've been very proactive in addressing the emergent needs of the homeless in the province. For a number of months we've been working with community agencies, with the municipalities and organizations, and that's to ensure that they're able to assist the homeless with winter emergency shelter in their own communities. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Member for Calgary-Bow: in Calgary today we did open an emergency winter shelter, which was the Foothills Shelter. It will be operated by the Mustard Seed until April of 2008. This winter emergency shelter will provide 450 emergency spaces for the homeless, and that's good news.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much. The second question is to the same minister. How many emergency spaces were provided last year, and will that 450 be enough for Calgary and others in the province for this year?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that with our strong economy people will arrive in our province without resources to establish themselves. That's why, as I said earlier, we partnered with municipalities and community organizations to provide additional winter emergency shelter spaces. This winter we added other municipalities to the program, like Lloydminster and High Level. In response to the member's question this year we're providing more emergency spaces than we've ever had before in the province. This year the emergency shelter budget tripled to 7 and a half million dollars, which will provide 940 emergency shelter spaces, and that's fairly significant.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you. A final question, Mr. Speaker, is also to the same minister. Are we doing anything to move people beyond their dependency upon the winter emergency shelters?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question addresses why the Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, which was recently announced, is so important. Each year we do keep spending millions of dollars on solutions which address the immediacy but not the long-term, fundamental causes of homelessness. We know – we've heard it in the Assembly before – we can't keep doing the same thing over and over again and expect different results. The secretariat will work with communities. They'll work with communities and the homeless foundations in assisting them with their long-term plans and their 10-year plans. Also, the secretariat will provide leadership collaboration and co-operation as the 10-year strategy for homelessness is developed for our province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

#### Crime Reduction and Safe Communities

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing I've learned in this Assembly is that when the government is spending money on something, they announce it in the biggest and boldest lettering available. That is why the government response to the recent report and recommendations on the safe communities task force was confusing. Not once anywhere was there any mention of money, not in the press release and not in the background documents. Then when challenged, the Premier told us in a press conference that \$470 million over three years has been committed. To the Solicitor General: what assurances do we have that this verbal commitment will bind your government to fully funding the recommendations of the task force, or are we supposed to just take the Premier's spoken word?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Security and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member mentioned, our Premier did commit to \$470 million for implementing these task force recommendations, and I look forward to that member and his colleagues across the floor supporting it when you bring it up in the budget.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding, then, that we're going to see this in the spring budget, hopefully. This government, though, has so many examples of reports and recommendations that sit in a drawer or on a shelf gathering dust or are implemented piece by piece here and there with no clear plan. That is why I was questioning it. The best example is the crystal meth task force, headed by Colleen Klein, the former Premier's wife, which came out with many good recommendations after months of public consultation. As happens so often, this report is in need of an APB to determine its whereabouts. Again to the Solicitor General: what assurances can he give us that the safe communities task force recommendations are not going to meet with the same fate?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, in regard to the crystal meth task force this ministry is already moving ahead on a number of initiatives that were mentioned in the crystal meth recommendations. In regard to the safe communities/crime prevention task force, we plan on implementing the ones that we have committed to.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** That's the disconnect, Mr. Speaker. They say they're moving on these initiatives. We don't see this in the House. The safe communities task force recommended, for example, adding more police officers, but to do this, the minister needs to review and revamp the criteria for municipal policing grants. This government has repeatedly refused to revamp these criteria, and in their report they state that the recommendations and the provincial funding formula need further study. The current funding formula is so ridiculous that a town that has 5,001 people will end up paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for policing while a town with just 5,000 gets everything paid for. To the minister: why are small municipalities being penalized for experiencing growth? Why is there no sliding scale for police funding for towns that exceed 5,000 people?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again, Mr. Speaker, any of the programs we have in place are subject to review time and again. The police grant program is one of those that we look at on a continual basis. In regard to the 5,000 population, we do give those communities two-year assistance on that particular program. The help is there. I also want to point out to the hon. member that this government also returns approximately \$100 million to police agencies as a result of fines that are collected in our province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Opening of U.S. Border to Live Cattle

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Border closures, court rulings, the changing dollar have created hardships for my producers. Many of my constituents in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne depend on the cattle industry for their livelihoods. Today the United States Department of Agriculture implemented its final BSE rule, allowing the importation from Canada of bison and live cattle over the age of 30 months. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Can the minister explain the impact of this rule on my producers in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne and others across the province? How quickly can they expect to ship cattle?

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this is absolutely a positive step finally for our cattle industry. It's been a long time coming, but some hard work by both the provincial government and the new ag department in the federal government has paid off. Live cattle and bison born on or after March 1, 1999, including breeding animals, which is very important, and meat products will be allowed into the U.S. Rule 2 restores trade and recognizes the effectiveness of our BSE safeguards.

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. In Whitecourt-Ste. Anne I have an advisory committee made up of producers, and we've spent many hours talking about

age verification. Today's ruling will stress the importance of age verification for our producers. Can the minister tell us what steps are being taken to encourage age verification amongst Alberta's cattle industry and the producers border to border?

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly an important question indeed. We've been working with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency since October of 2006. To date over 3 million birthdates have been recorded in the CCIA database. Alberta beef, of course, represents over 50 or maybe 60 per cent of the Canadian total. Although we have a multitude of cattle age-verified and identified, it's time to move forward. Now is the time we must age-verify all cattle that are born in the future.

2:20

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the minister responsible for international trade. Like I said in the preamble, this issue is very, very important to the producers in my constituency, and the issue is: what's next, Mr. Minister? You know, the producers have been faced with many issues. R-CALF always seems to have endless issues to raise in the U.S. courts. It seems like one barrier after another hits the producer at the primary level. My question is to the minister. What's next? What can we expect?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm very proud to say that Albertans are free traders who certainly oppose unfair trade barriers. We are working with the federal government and our partners through the WTO, the World Trade Organization, but there is no doubt that Alberta's agrifood industry would benefit from the reduction of trade-distorting subsidies and market access barriers. We are committed towards that end and that principle. However, we are extremely frustrated at this time with the glacial pace of the World Trade Organization negotiations, but we remain committed to achieving that objective and benefiting producers here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 88 questions and responses. We'll now return to the Routine.

head:

### **Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees**

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to the requirements of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, it is my pleasure to rise today and table the required number of copies of the 2007 report of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The report will be available on the committee's website, and I have arranged to have copies distributed to each hon. member. I'd like to thank the staff at Alberta Finance, the office of the Auditor General, and the Legislative Assembly Office for the dedicated support they provide to the committee throughout the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

### **Presenting Petitions**

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present a petition signed by 113 central Albertans requesting that the regulations for Bill 45, Smoke-free Places (Tobacco Reduction) Amendment Act, 2007, reflect the intent of the legislation as outlined in second reading.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to launch a full public inquiry under the authority of the Public Inquiries Act into spying practices by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (AEUB) and the Minister of Energy's oversight role of the AEUB.

This petition is signed by people from Buck Lake and Rimbey and Bluffton.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a petition from 85 Albertans. The undersigned residents "petition the Legislative Assembly to pass Bill 45, the Smoke-Free Places (Tobacco Reduction) Amendment Act, and not dilute its contents so as to compromise the version approved at second reading."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two petitions today. One, indeed, from a number of individuals: 252 of them supporting the passage of Bill 45. So their mission has already been accomplished.

The second: I actually have two collections of the same petition, totalling 560, who are urging the government to ensure that remuneration paid to employees working with persons with disabilities is standardized, that they're fairly compensated and wages remain competitive, that they have improved access to professional development opportunities, and would the government please introduce province-wide service- and outcomes-focused level of care standards.

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from all the members of the newly elected executive of the Kilkenny community league and others, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to cut unnecessary regulations that cause time to be lost in filling out forms and other burdensome and unnecessary rules (red tape) by supporting Bill 213 the Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cheffins:** Mr. Speaker, I rise with signatures from 18 Calgaryans petitioning the Legislative Assembly to pass Bill 45, Smoke-free Places (Tobacco Reduction) Amendment Act, 2007.

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

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a petition with 37 signatures. It reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to immediately establish, in consultation with community leaders and interested citizens, the Keystone Wildlife Preserve in a designated area west of Edmonton, north of Highway 16 and east of highway 751, to ensure that wildlife habitat and the surrounding environment are protected for generations to come.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions today. The first one is the same petition that's urging the Legislative Assembly to support Bill 45. I am pleased to tell the petitioners that we have done just that, and it's awaiting royal assent.

The other petition, Mr. Speaker, was signed by 231 Albertans from many communities but mostly from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Leduc, St. Albert, Grande Prairie, and Spruce Grove. It reads: we, the undersigned residents hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to "introduce legislation or amend regulations to give consumers in Alberta access, even if limited or controlled, to raw (unpasteurized) dairy products, particularly for health or medical reasons."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there additional petitions? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. I just want to add the voices of a number of Calgarians to the successful passing of Bill 45 in order to address the enormous health, social, and financial implications of tobacco use in Alberta.

head:

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I wish to give oral notice to propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur on the November 15, 2007, report on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Franklin J. Work be reappointed Information and Privacy Commissioner for a four-year term.

head:

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. We've got a whole list of others.

**Mr. Martin:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two from the leader of the third party. First of all, I'd like to table the appropriate numbers of copies of letters from Wayne and Marjorie Brideaux of Calgary regarding this government's failure to rectify the housing situation by allowing rent gouging to continue. They ask when this government will "stop applying ideology in the face of fact" and listen to the findings of the housing task force.

The second one, Mr. Speaker, was to table the appropriate number of copies of letters from Aubrey Finnen, a landowner in central Alberta, regarding his objections to the way he has been treated by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is a document regarding geothermal applications, a recent document that shows how 2 per cent of the electrical energy generated for California is from geothermal now, and the entire capital of Iceland is heated that way.

Another is a communication from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business outlining support for the Bill 213, the Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one document to table. It's the article from *Banff Crag & Canyon* of November 13, 2007, which I referred to in the House last Thursday and which reports that the only two child care centres in Bow Valley, one in Canmore and one in Banff, have a two-year waiting list.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first one: A Review of Discovery Wildlife Park Based on the Alberta Zoo Standards by the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

The second one is A Review of the Guzoo Animal Farm Based on the Alberta Zoo Standards, again by the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today pertaining to the same subject. On November 9 my wife and I along with the MLAs from Edmonton-Centre and Edmonton-Calder attended an event at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers titled Global Gallery. The first tabling is the news release announcing this event, which was designed to showcase immigrant talent in the area of visual arts, as in painting, photography, and sculpting.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the actual program book, containing many biographies and samplings of all 25 of those artists' work. It is now available online at [www.emcn.ab.ca](http://www.emcn.ab.ca).

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

2:30

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is a letter from Stephen Renaud in which he is talking about the need to look at the quality of life for persons with disabilities: "Because of the low AISH income many individuals are challenged in today's housing market. Available low cost housing is very difficult to find."

The second letter is from M. Platts, where she says: "I do not believe that the purpose of providing early child education in any form is to make money but to provide a service. I would like to see that service fully funded for all children by our government."

The third one is from Kerri Bischoff. "I was appalled at the decrease in the maximum Number of children allowed in a care facility, 24 down to 16, as well as the food catering fees and of course the rise in cost due to the decrease of spots allowed in a facility."

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of tablings today. The first tabling is the program of the western legacy awards, which we celebrated on November 9 at the Roundup Centre in Calgary. The awards were presented for innovation, youth, and sustained contribution.

My second tabling consists of the highlights of this past weekend's Parkland conference I attended, the theme of which was From Crisis to Hope: Building Just and Sustainable Communities, a goal all members of this House have been tasked by our constituents to achieve.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling correspondence from Yvonne Mireau of Edmonton. She's suffering from a serious jaw injury and has had to have it wired shut for the past year, during which she has been on a liquid food diet. Now, her treatment has cost her over \$1,000, but she's not covered by Alberta Health as it's classified as dental. She wishes to draw the attention of the minister to this major hole in our supposedly universal health care.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table the requisite number of copies of the Fort McMurray Youth Housing Needs Report, prepared under the direction of the Youth Shelter Subcommittee at the request of the Homeless Initiatives Steering Committee, regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. I referenced this report earlier today in question period.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first two are in regard to my questions from earlier in question period. My first tabling is an invoice from June 1, 2007, to Kellan Fluckiger, executive director, Alberta Department of Energy, for \$38,000 for 76 hours of professional services. It's signed by Murray A. Nelson from the Mana Energy Group Limited.

The second tabling I have is a similar invoice, but this one is dated September 1, 2007. It's for 92 hours at \$500 an hour for a total of \$46,000. It's to the same executive director, Mr. Kellan Fluckiger of the Alberta Department of Energy, and it's signed, "Yours truly, Murray A. Nelson."

My third tabling is a letter dated November 8, 2007, to the hon. Premier from Mr. Bronconnier, the mayor of Calgary. This is outlining some of the concerns that Calgary city council and the citizens of Calgary have regarding Bill 46, the Alberta Utilities Commission Act. I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly, if they have not read this letter, to please do so quickly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Hon. members, before we move forward, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**  
(continued)

**The Speaker:** That being the case, the hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some guests from the Dunvegan-Central Peace constituency. I believe they are seated in both galleries. I would ask each of them to rise as I introduce them: Denis Sauvageau from Falher; Dan and Huguette Ropchan, Adele Boucher Rymhs, Knut Moller, and Eileen McGuire from Grimshaw; Peter and Sara Jessing and Trudy Keillor from Berwyn; and George Beinert from Whitelaw. Earlier I had a chance to meet with them. They're here to express their concerns over the nuclear proposal. Please join me in giving them our traditional warm welcome.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you. It's also my pleasure to welcome some constituents who have travelled from our far northwest corner of the province to express some concerns they have about nuclear energy and to urge the government to engage Albertans in a policy discussion. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I was unable to meet with my constituents earlier, but I plan to sit in on a meeting this afternoon. Nonetheless, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this House Brenda Brochu; Erik Moller; Micheline Danburger; Wanda, Genevieve, Monique, and Jacqueline Laurin; Louise Alm; and Carol Akininstall. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Again it looks as though we're just catching the last few of the representation of guests from the nuclear demonstration this afternoon. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members Sonja Myllymaki from Edmonton, Izumi Kuribayishi from Edmonton as well, Art Jackson from Jasper, Bob Cameron from DeBolt, Connie Bresnahan from Hinton, Paul Pryce from Calgary, and David Cammeron from Calgary. If you could rise and receive the Assembly's welcome.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Motions for Returns**

**Mr. Renner:** I move that Motion for a Return 9 stand and retain its place.

[Motion carried]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 213  
Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act**

[Debate adjourned November 8: Mr. Eggen speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder may continue. I believe he still has nine minutes in his speaking time on Bill 213.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I believe that I've completed my comments on that bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 213, the Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act as presented by the hon.

Member for Edmonton-Manning. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for introducing this legislation. I'm very appreciative because it indicates that he is very much in agreement with what the government is doing in this whole field of regulatory reform.

I want to make a few comments, though, about the proposed bill. Quite frankly, the intent of the bill, while admirable and right in keeping with what we would agree with – there are a few things that I want to bring to the attention of the Assembly. If we were to follow this bill, it would be very, very simple to do what is in here, but there's more to this than just counting numbers. In section 2(a) currently it asks for the number of regulations. If you're going to do just a number count, that would not necessarily accomplish what we really need to do. Some of the things that are in this bill that talk to the need of regulatory reform – I guess if you look at the preamble of it and you see the number of reasons for the introduction of this and the reason that we need to do it, we agree with those. But just counting numbers is not going to accomplish what the hon. member has identified in the preamble of his bill.

2:40

I would like to expand on what we feel needs to be done and what, in fact, we are doing. I think it's important, when a bill is presented, that it be in the greater public interest because that's really what you need to have as a driving force and to affect all the regulations. To address that issue, there are a number of criteria that I believe it should meet. Those are things like be necessary for the maintenance and/or enhancement of the public health, education, order, and safety; be necessary for the maintenance and/or enhancement of the environment; and contribute to the goals of sustainable development. Quite frankly, one of the things we hear often as we're talking to businesspeople about regulations and forms and things of this nature is that, in fact, there's a great burden, that they spend a lot of time and money having to fill out forms, having to meet certain regulations that maybe don't address some of the things that I'm just describing. It must contribute significantly and positively to the competitiveness of the private sector in the province, including promotion of innovation and encouragement of efficiency in the conduct of business, and of course be necessary for the effective internal administration of government of the province.

This regulatory reform is more than just outside of government. There's a big cost to government with some of these regulations. So I think it's important that we weigh that against the need – I believe that we need to look more at what it is that we're trying to accomplish; in other words, the outcome of the regulation.

Quite frankly, when we talk later in the bill about the accountability portion of the act, you need some way of measuring that, and I believe that we've got some suggestions that would really accomplish that. I think that there are some other very important elements that are necessary in the regulations, things like identifying the problem and desired objectives or outcomes – and that's what I spoke to briefly before – and to of course establish a clear case for the action and also to consider the options, regulatory or nonregulatory, for achieving the desired outcomes. Once again, it's a measurement of outcomes: how do you get there? Look at the problem and what it is you want to do. Now how do you get there?

Consult with those potentially affected in developing the regulatory action with the participation of the community. Once again, it is extremely important that as we develop regulations and/or review regulations, it not be just an exercise internally. Currently under our request for regulation we do have a section that speaks to having to consult with the stakeholders, consult with the public.

Assessing the impacts, costs, and benefits of each option for consumers, business, government, and of course the greater community, deciding on the alternatives on the basis of transparent criteria, and adopting the options of the greatest net benefit to the

community and developing a strategy to implement and enforce and review the preferred regulatory actions to ensure that regulation is relevant and effective over time. Now, I spoke briefly earlier about the need for having a way of measuring these regulations, and I believe that up front we have to make sure that we address certain issues so that in the process of approving regulations, we need to be able to look at the various terms and categories. I think that we can do that, and that will help with the measurement at the end.

I think we have to look at things like the environmental quality, the quality of life or health, social and cultural effects – that is, the awareness and tolerance, et cetera – changes in prices and quality of products, the effects on competitiveness and/or market openness, reduction in compliance and administrative costs, increasing market choice, improvements in information. Those are just a few of the things that I believe need to be incorporated. While some of them are alluded to in the principles of the act, I believe that there need to be some more things added to it. Certainly, if and when this reaches the committee stage, I would be wanting to look at some of those things.

There's going to be a lot of activity in the whole regulatory reform and all of the regulations because as TILMA develops, there is going to be the necessity to look at a lot of regulations. Currently we're asking departments to do an inventory. I'm not saying numbers; I'm saying do an inventory so that they know exactly what it is that they have in the form of regulations, that they know the quality of those regulations. Do they meet these other criteria that we're setting out for those regulations? Then as we try to synchronize with the TILMA process, we're going to have to be looking at how our regulations fit with the B.C. regulations.

Of course, another very good process that's developing – I'm very pleased to say that as I understand it, the city of Edmonton is going to be involved in it – is a system called BizPaL. What this system will do over time – it's a great undertaking, but what we're trying to do is make sure that business knows through one window what the municipal requirements are, for example, to establish a restaurant. What kind of regulations are there as far as the province is concerned? Then in some cases there are federal regulations that get involved. On the municipal side, of course, you get into all things like land-use bylaws and building codes that the city may have. Of course, on the provincial side, once again, you get into things like the building code.

There's another area that's very critical that we address, and I just don't see in the bill where this would be handled. For example, a restaurant: you're going to be affected by many government departments, not only the municipal but government departments. We've got to be able to say, whether it be to one ministry, "you will take the lead," and then it will be spread across the other ministries that are involved. Somehow we have to through the regulatory process determine which are involved and who should be taking the lead, which ministry, because that's one of the things that is extremely frustrating.

**The Speaker:** I think the speaking time is over.

**Mr. Lund:** Oh, I'm sorry. Just one thing.

**The Speaker:** No. You'd need unanimous consent for that. Sorry. It doesn't quite work that way.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 213, Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act. The purpose of this bill is simply to ensure that current and proposed regulations in regard to red tape for businesses

and nonprofit organizations are necessary. It attempts to streamline red tape for businesses and nonprofit organizations and citizens to reduce what is an unnecessary cost.

Alberta Liberals have been strong advocates of this type of legislation in the past and applaud this member for bringing this bill forward. It is a bill worthy of support. This bill forces the government to do something that has been absent in Alberta for a long, long time: be accountable to the people and to the Legislative Assembly. It opens the doors that have been closed for so long. It's in the public interest and, as such, should be supported. Businesses in Alberta are drowning in red tape. It is time to throw them a lifeline.

This legislation is a long time coming, something that small- and medium-sized businesses everywhere have been calling for. Mr. Speaker, those calls have previously fallen on deaf ears. We have an opportunity to do the right thing here today, the right thing for Alberta businesses. A vote against this bill is a vote against transparency and accountability, and we must make effective and sustainable red tape relief a top priority.

**2:50**

Mr. Speaker, this bill is designed to eliminate unnecessary government red tape that poses a significant financial burden and a significant time burden on businesses, nonprofit organizations, and private citizens. This bill will place the burden on government to ensure that all regulations that are being posed or that will be passed in the future dealing with accountability and compliance will be subject to full process to ensure that they are absolutely necessary. It will ensure that all government regulations have an element of accountability to ensure that they are necessary regulations and that alternatives to regulations do not exist.

Bill 213 places a specific timeline on the Minister of Justice to develop a regulatory review, regulatory reform plans, and progress reports for all new regulations. In other words, Mr. Speaker, it forces government to undergo a process before passing new regulations to ensure necessity. It also addresses public documents that the minister is required to make public again. It puts into legislation a process to be followed regarding documents that the minister is required to make public. The documents must be placed before the Legislature and must be made available to the general public.

These are the strong accountability functions. Mr. Speaker, this Bill 213 is about accountability. You know, businesspeople are facing lots of burdens, especially fiscal responsibility, taxing, and spending, and burdens of regulations, especially increases in accountability. Government, I think, must reduce the burden on businesspeople in this area.

This bill also is about compliance, Mr. Speaker. I receive numerous phone calls and e-mails from some businesses in my riding. They are facing, you know, lots of problems with labour shortages. We all know that this is a problem, not only in my riding but all over Alberta, and lots of businesspeople are facing this.

Even the temporary foreign workers: there are so many flaws there. You know, they are blaming temporary foreign workers even though this program is a federal program. But they expect the Alberta government, because the Alberta government has signed onto this accord recently – they think that that accord is not strong enough. It is not in their favour because sometimes they get approval from HRDC, which is a totally federal government department, and once they get approval from them, they send those papers back to their potential employees back home, wherever those people are coming from, maybe in Asia, maybe in Europe.

They are facing lots of problems. Even, you know, the employees or some agencies overseas pay an application fee, and after that they don't get any response. What they get is just a simple letter that they

don't qualify for it; their financial situation is not sound enough. Sometimes they get a denial letter just saying: your intention is not to work in Alberta; maybe your intention is to stay here permanently. Those people are telling me that, you know, if their financial situation is so strong, why would they come to Canada to work as a temporary foreign worker?

It is understood, Mr. Speaker, that there are lots of other problems that foreign workers are facing in this country, especially accommodation, and inflation is going up. Everything, especially in Alberta recently, has gone up, and they are facing financial problems here as well.

I'm not criticizing only the department, federal government or the provincial government. There are lots of flaws in this system, especially in some agencies working overseas – we don't have any control – and some agencies working here. Employees are also, you know, playing some dirty games sometimes. I heard that some employees also come here on a sponsorship for a certain employer, and then afterwards they slip, and they work for somebody else.

Businesspeople are complaining that the labour shortage is still a big headache for them. It's a big problem, and it's a hurdle. The government of Alberta, I mean, has signed an agreement with the federal government, and they should talk to their Tory cousins in Ottawa and do something about it. I said that definitely, when I speak in the Legislature, I will pass on your message. I hope the ministers concerned are listening.

Even last session I introduced a motion to not rely on temporary foreign workers, to increase the number of PRs, permanent residents, or immigration in this country. These messages should be sent to the federal government so that it helps not only the citizens of Canada; it should help businesspeople. Also, some organizations working here who are nonpolitical, nonreligious: it might help them, too.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to Bill 213. I'd like to begin my speech by complimenting the Member for Edmonton-Manning on his hard work and dedication to this issue. It's an incredibly timely issue that needs to be addressed. Alberta has work to do on regulatory reduction, so I appreciate greatly the member's foresight and his dedication to this. I'm sure small business, volunteer organizations, and all Albertans in general appreciate him bringing this to the discussion in the Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that

Bill 213, Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Services pursuant to temporary Standing Order 74.2.

Thank you very much.

This bill focuses, Mr. Speaker, on counting regulations, which is an incredibly important part of any regulatory review process that this government would undertake. It creates a visual picture of the regulations, and quite frankly it brings to the consciousness of Albertans and bureaucrats as well as members of this Assembly just how many regulations there are and how encompassing they can be and perhaps on occasion even a barrier to growth and productivity in this province.

**3:00**

Mr. Speaker, that is not the entire process that needs to be undertaken to make sure that we review regulations to minimize the burden that we place on society with the regulations that we have. It's critical that we're able to do a cost-benefit analysis of all the regulations. In fact, some statistics and some numbers show – and



I think some other members have mentioned them – that for every dollar the government spends to administer a regulation, the private sector spends \$20 trying to comply with that regulation. So when we come up with new regulations, it's critical that we do a cost-benefit analysis to determine just how much it will cost the voluntary sector or private business or any other segment of our economy or society that has to adapt to that regulation.

It's also critical – and I've heard a couple of other members discuss it here as well – that we're able to do a time-cost analysis on what regulations mean to sectors of the economy. In fact, I know some members here have cited information that some Albertans spend up to nine hours a week just trying to comply with regulations that we've set in this province, whether it's a small business or a voluntary organization. Mr. Speaker, that can translate into upwards of 40 days per year in just complying with government regulations. If we're going to do this analysis, it's very important – and this bill is critical – that we count the regulations, but it's also important that we do a cost-benefit analysis and that we do a time-cost analysis.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that I don't think I heard one member of this Assembly mention is that we need some place for people within society to actually come and speak to the government about a particular regulation that's creating a tremendous burden on their business or their sector of the economy or their sector of society. We hear all the time about the problems with regulations and how much of a burden they are, but very rarely have any of my constituents or the people that I've dealt with in the business community or the volunteer community come forward and said: this is the regulation that's creating a burden. They talk about regulations in general all the time. If there was some body or organization or institution set up within government that allowed members of the public to come and cite specific regulations and educate us on just what a particular burden it was to them and their business or their public-sector organization, it would really help us to address the regulatory burden.

Mr. Speaker, this field committee that I've asked by motion that this bill be referred to would provide an opportunity to discuss, examine, and recommend changes to this bill in an open and transparent manner. This process has the potential to determine the best means available when addressing the important issue of regulatory reform and to incorporate those actions with those currently being undertaken by this government. I know that there are many actions being undertaken by this government to reduce the regulatory burden. This process would allow a full evaluation, and it would allow review by the public, because even though we have some brilliant members in this House, we can't consider everything all of the time. The purpose of creating those standing committees was to get input from the public that has to deal with the regulations that we're dealing with. This regulatory efficiency is an important issue to this government, and ensuring that the system remains vibrant is essential to the prosperity of this great province.

I commend the member for bringing this forward. I think it's timely. I think he deserves the recognition of this House and the recognition of the public, both the private-sector businesses and the voluntary sector, because they face a lot of regulatory burdens as well that we often don't consider.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have an amendment to Bill 213. First of all, we'll proceed with the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, did you want to get in on this amendment?

**Rev. Abbott:** No.

**The Speaker:** We'll proceed, then. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I have to start as well by thanking the hon. sponsor of Bill 213, the Member for Edmonton-Manning. I'm thanking him because he's raising awareness about this issue that, as was said before, does not only apply to members of the business community, in particular the small business community, but also community leagues, nonprofit organizations, volunteer-run organizations, and so on.

I also have to put on the record my appreciation for the effort he made to make every member of this House aware of his bill, you know, offering some background information and offering justification for why he was sponsoring this bill, which really should be adopted by all private members in this House. The model of sharing information ahead of time to try to enlighten those members as to why and the rationale behind it and, hopefully, to secure their support, as was said before, is something that has been part of the Alberta Liberal platform for some time. As such, we have no problem supporting this initiative.

Now to the motion as introduced by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. While I'm not necessarily opposed to referring this particular piece of legislation, the idea that's contained in it, the subject matter that it raises, to one of the four standing policy field committees, I have to question what I am starting to see as a pattern developing here in this Assembly and in this government, Mr. Speaker. By that pattern I am referencing the fact that it seems to be the easiest way out of having to make a decision by referring an idea or a bill to a committee or a task force. We have different names for these things now. Then these people meet, and they have hearings, and they invite submissions. A report or a file is issued with recommendations and suggestions, and then most of the time it gets ignored. I don't want to see this happen today, and I don't want to see this happen to this idea in particular.

The regulatory burden is not only huge, but it's increasing, Mr. Speaker, and we need to definitely address it. So I would rather see this House commit today and make the decision today and pass this bill today because I haven't heard anybody in this House from either side who has expressed any major concern to it. The opposition as well as members from the government have both indicated that, yes, it is timely, yes, it is important, yes, we have heard the cries and the plight of those people from the small business community, from the nonprofits, and, yes, we agree. So why delay it further? Why send it to the committee? The committee takes its time, and then the committee reports back to the Assembly. We're going to still make the same decision, I'm hoping, which is to reduce regulatory burdens and to make our regulations more efficient.

So I think that it's an unnecessary step. I think that it's wasting time. You know, in my opinion – maybe I'm a bit cynical now, having been here for three years – it just stalls. I haven't heard anybody opposed to the idea, so let's get on with it, and let's vote today. That is basically my two cents with respect to this motion to refer Bill 213.

Now, I did some research, Mr. Speaker, and this is not new. We're talking about an issue, you know, that is not an innovative thing that the House is discussing or contemplating. We've had task forces, and we've had review committees for as long back as the library here can produce records. I actually went and asked the Legislature Library, and they produced one of the reports. I'm telling you, we seem to have task forces galore in this province. We have reports galore. Here is the regulatory reform task force report from 1997, the status report, fairly thick. It talks about what should be done. The next year the same thing, 1998 status report, even thicker. Nothing has been done yet. The Regulatory Review

Secretariat, which evolved from the earlier task force, 1999 status report, extremely enlightening and very useful had it been implemented. Then you move on, Mr. Speaker, to 2001 as well, the Regulatory Review Secretariat status report, and so on. I didn't ask for all those records. I just asked for a sampling, and the Leg. Library was really generous and shared these with me.

This secretariat has not been eliminated or struck. It is still here. So why do we need to do this outside of something that is already here? Three members of this Assembly sit on it. One of them is the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House, who has spoken earlier. Another member is the MLA for Calgary-Bow, and a third member is the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake. I mean, these people sit on this committee supposedly to study this. I don't think we need another committee, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** On the amendment the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, as I've already recognized, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

3:10

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As deputy chair of one of the policy field committees I find this amendment interesting. I'm a little bit torn about the direction in which, perhaps, the House should proceed because I do believe the policy field committees have done some good work in their initial efforts over the spring, summer, and fall, and I believe that they have the potential to continue to do good work.

Having said that, I tend to support my colleague from Edmonton-McClung that we are adding in here a step that I don't think needs to be taken at this time, Mr. Speaker. I'm referring back to *Hansard* on May 14, 2007, when private member's Bill 207, which was introduced by my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, was up for second reading debate in this House and there was an attempt to bring in a similar amendment at that point to refer Bill 207 to another policy field committee. I believe community services rather than government services on that one. There were some quite strong arguments made by members on the government side of the House, albeit speaking, I am sure, privately, for themselves and for no one else, because it was a private member's business day, some fairly convincing arguments against referring that bill to the policy field committee. One member said that it should be debated here and now on the floor of the House, for instance, and there were other comments like that.

I'm reminded as well – although I wish I could reference this for today's *Hansard*, and I can't. I think I picked it up on a TV show somewhere some years ago. Maybe it was that British parliamentary satire *Yes Minister* – I'm not sure – where it would have been Sir Humphrey, if that was the show, the chief public servant advising the minister, who would have said: Mr. Minister, we're all in favour of cutting red tape as long as we cut it lengthwise. It strikes me that that's what we're attempting to do here. We're attempting to drag out the process of dealing with the red tape that small businesses across my constituency and all over this province are strangling in, and I don't think that we need to do that.

With respect to the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright and his concern about, I guess, the breadth and scope of regulations that could be involved here, if this Bill 213, the Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, passes today on second reading, then we can refer it to the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Speaker, I believe we can do much of the same work in Committee of the Whole. I see no reason why we can't.

Now, again, as I said before, I believe that the policy field committees can do fine work. They can dig deeper. They can do all sorts of things that we cannot do at committee stage in this House.

They can call witnesses. They can commission reports, studies, et cetera, et cetera. But that, in my view, might be an appropriate tack to take after Bill 213 proceeds through the House.

I think Bill 213 gives the government the discretion to set a reduction target in the number of regulations if it chooses. It does not require or specify that the number of regulations has to be reduced, that sort of thing. I think that Bill 213, if passed by this House, can set a general tone – and perhaps we can get quite specific at the Committee of the Whole stage – for where the province wants to go on regulatory accountability and transparency. I mean, there are a few bad apples in any bunch, but you'd be hard pressed to find very many small businesspeople who would not acknowledge that there is the need for some, you know, government regulation of their business.

I take it I'm done. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to close debate on Bill 213 as amended with an amendment in place. Proceed.

**Mr. Backs:** Just a quick point of clarification. Is the amendment still on?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we'll proceed to hear you close the debate. Then we'll proceed to take the vote, first on the amendment, and then, depending on the resolution of the amendment, we could go forward to the second vote.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very, very pleased to have seen such interest in this bill. There were very many speakers – I counted 17 – who have fully spoken to this bill. I think that that underscores the importance in many Albertans' minds, in many small businesses, in many voluntary organizations, and even in many organizations in the public sector of concerns over the time they spend on the regulatory burden and how to deal with it. We've had a number of, you know, questions that have been raised in question period that have looked at this issue, such as the issue that looked to the problems with the log books in the transportation industry and today in the issue of smart cards, perhaps, in health care and the issue of waiting lists and things like that. These are all parts of the paper burden, the time burden, the waiting that has made for some inefficiency in our society.

In reality, you know, the success of a society is defined by many things, but one of the things is its efficiency, and one of the things is its ability to do things in a way that doesn't waste the time of its citizens. I think there are many things that are in this Bill 213 that can work to do that. I think that many people have worked to bring matters forward on this, with many good comments from all of the 17 speakers on this issue. I really don't have time in the five minutes to speak to all of them although I would like to do so and thank them all for their many comments.

There has been brought to me the need for some improvements, some things that could be brought forward on the issue from further public hearings and from further debate in committee. There are, of course, two options to that. That's to go to third reading, and the other is to go to a policy field committee. You know, I'm torn somewhat on which would be the best, but I would support the amendment from the Member for Battle River-Wainwright in that I think it is important to take that extra public consultation and to put that forward to a little bit more sober second thought, you might call it, over a bit of a longer period of time even though we would like

to see that brought in in departments and in areas in a way and in a fashion that would come to implement some of these matters sooner. I think the fact that we have brought a lot of this to light will certainly have a psychological effect on many of the rule-makers.

With that, I thank the Assembly for their support in the many words that have been spoken on this one, and I close, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 213 carried]

head: 3:20 **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Bill 212**  
**Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act**

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honour to rise on behalf of the constituency of Calgary-Hays and begin the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 212, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. If passed, this innovative piece of legislation has the potential to bring community safety and quality of life to a higher level in Alberta. I believe that this is what we all strive for.

I would like to thank the members of this Assembly for the tremendous support they have shown throughout the process. I believe that the ways this bill will help our communities are numerous and far reaching. As legislators and representatives of our constituents we owe it to Albertans to thoroughly consider all aspects of legislation that can increase safety in our province. I commend my colleagues for doing just that.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to address some of the remaining questions which were previously raised by the opposition. During second reading debate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview raised concerns regarding the possibility that drug houses would move from neighbourhood to neighbourhood with the measures called for by Bill 212. I believe the diverse mechanisms within this legislation properly deal with this apprehension. The act is able to address this concern because it attacks drug and prostitution operations from two separate directions.

First, if it is found that the manufacturing, purchasing, sale, or consumption of intoxicants is occurring on a property, Bill 212 can shut the operation down by requiring all implicated persons to vacate the property and not allow them to re-enter or reoccupy it. Furthermore, the Court of Queen's Bench can require the safety agency to close the property for use and occupation for up to 90 days. This means that even in the event that an individual is found to be responsible for breaking the law and is subsequently sent to jail, the property itself would no longer be available for use. The individual in prison would not be able to ask associates to continue the disturbing behaviours, as is sometimes the case. Therefore, drug production would cease on that property.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, any time and place that a drug or prostitution operation is brought to the attention of the agency proposed by this bill, pending a third investigation it can be shut down no matter what community it is spotted and reported in, and if the operation moves, it can be reported, investigated, and shut down again. Committing a crime is partly a matter of convenience. If a

drug operation repeatedly gets shut down due to community observations, eventually these individuals will get frustrated and cease production in Alberta. They may find somewhere else more convenient, without observant eyes and ears in every direction, but thanks to this proposed legislation that place will likely be outside the great neighbourhoods of this province.

Mr. Chairman, while the same member conceded that Bill 212 properly deals with the supply of illicit substances, he was concerned about the demand side of drugs. I am proud to say that one of the spectacular features of this proposed act is its preventative nature and capabilities. For instance, if someone in the community notices a lot of traffic at an individual's home and witnesses increasingly disturbing situations occurring on the property, the community member can call the agency for help. If the agency finds that activities are occurring that negatively affect the community but are not beyond repair, the agency can address the situation in a community-based manner.

In addition, those who may not be heavily involved in disturbing behaviours may realize that it is not worth losing their tenancy agreement over these activities and, consequently, cease them. This negative attention from the law holds the potential to lead a person out of trouble before the situation becomes too grave and before they are tainted with a criminal record. It is in this manner that I believe the act addresses demand. It identifies issues before they get out of hand and before addictions are created.

Mr. Chairman, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora voiced concern about the role of peace officers within the act. In part 3 it is stated that "if requested to do so, a peace officer shall provide any assistance required by an inspector or the Director in the performance of [their] duties." This just means that if an occupant of a property and any other persons at the property do not comply with a request to leave the property, the director may obtain the assistance of a peace officer to remove them from the property. The use of peace officers in this case would be a precaution in the event that the director fears complications.

The same member also had a concern with who exactly the director would use as investigators. In the jurisdictions which already use this legislation, directors employ individuals with extensive investigative experience. Their know-how is crucial to the success of this proposed act because these individuals are sworn in by the courts as experts. I assure the member that the investigators are of the highest calibre.

Lastly, I would like to address his concerns regarding the relationship of investigations under this act and those of the municipal police. Again, in the jurisdictions I have visited, these two bodies operate in a co-operative manner. The investigations mandated under the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act do not get in the way of police investigations since they keep in constant communication with each other and work as allies.

If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move a package of amendments to the bill and take a few moments to briefly outline them.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, we need to make sure that the amendments are circulated.

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, the amendment that is being circulated to you shall be referred to as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, you may proceed.

**Mr. Johnston:** Amendment A allows the director to delegate his or her powers, duties, or functions to an employee under the adminis-

tration of the minister. Amendments B, J, and Q call for the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act to be included under the jurisdiction of this bill. Amendments C, K, and L clarify which certificates of title are affected by a community safety order. Amendments D and P are simply style changes, and amendments E and M switch the term "interest" to "caveat" to be consistent with terms used in Alberta. Amendment E also ensures that caveats cannot be lapsed.

Amendment F clarifies the collection of information during the investigative process. Amendment G is a grammatical change. Amendment H seeks to strike out section 32(3) to be in sync with Alberta's Torrens system. Amendment I removes the term "summary conviction" since the term is not used in Alberta. Amendments N and O are cross-reference changes. Amendment R is a terminology change.

Mr. Chairman, I ask that these amendments be brought forward as one package if that is at all possible and acceptable to the committee. While these amendments are very minor, they will go far to strengthen Bill 212. The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act thoroughly confronts undesirable activities in our province. It presents many different approaches to deal with crime and disruptive behaviours. Therefore, we have a lot to consider here today.

I look forward to hearing the debate on the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and the amendments I have brought forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** Anybody on the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad to speak again and add some further thoughts to the debate on Bill 212. As I look at these amendments, it appears that they're mostly housekeeping but also clarifying some things in terms of delegation. "The Director may delegate the Director's powers, duties or functions under this Act to an employee under the administration of the Minister." I guess I'd like to have an opportunity to ask for some clarification on that. The other parts of the amendment I think are quite clear, and I would support them.

3:30

Bill 212's purpose is to enhance community and neighbourhood safety by providing a way for people within the community to make a complaint to the government about properties that habitually negatively impact the health, safety, or security of one or more persons in a neighbourhood and/or interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of one or more properties in a community or neighbourhood. This bill will provide for a government agency through the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Public Safety to respond to these complaints and put an end to activity that adversely affects or harms a neighbourhood. I'm thinking that this amendment means that that power can be delegated to an employee.

The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act would place a tool in the hands of law enforcement which will allow immediate action to be taken when safety in Alberta's communities is at risk. Bill 212 would give a director of law enforcement the power to apply to the Court of Queen's Bench to have restrictions placed upon a property when there is a balance of probability indicating that illegal or disruptive activity is occurring. This restriction could include removing excessive fortifications from a property or placing a community closure order on it. Among the many possible repercussions community safety orders would provide the property to be closed for a period of 90 days. After the end of this order the owners of the property would be permitted to return while any troublemaking tenant would be permanently evicted.

The individuals in my constituency that I've talked to about this believe that these restrictions will really be effective in reducing

dangerous activities in our communities and that they are a creative way to address the concerns that they have that there is a compromise to safety and the quality of life in our community. This forces property owners who are involved in activities which present a danger to communities to vacate the premises for a period of time, and we're therefore taking away their opportunity to put neighbours at risk. This is particularly true when we're talking about drug houses, where property is, I guess, attached to hazardous activities because the police can't know everything, and individuals in the community can take responsibility and report these things.

Bill 212 represents an opportunity for improvement because it outlines a specific process of reducing activities which can harm the public. It gives an opportunity to make our province a safer place for children by being proactive and focusing on the prevention rather than waiting for harm or dangerousness to reach a level of crisis. I really like that approach. I think this legislation ends up controlling dangerous activity through civil rather than criminal sanctions, and it allows us as Assembly members to take direct actions to protect Albertans. All Albertans have a right to live in a safe and secure environment.

The provisions of this proposed act empower citizens to identify activities which could disrupt families' healthy existence, and it provides a direct route to address criminals. With immediate and direct attention as is called for with Bill 212 – and I don't see anything in the amendments changing that – disruptive activity taking place in communities will not be given the opportunity to flourish.

A number of other jurisdictions have already passed very similar versions of this legislation. The provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia and Yukon have all brought forth legislation similar to this, especially the Saskatchewan version.

This legislation empowers citizens to take back control of their neighbourhoods by reporting problem nuisances and businesses. It will also hold property owners accountable for threatening or disturbing activities regularly taking place on their properties. I really think that that's an important step, and I applaud the Member for Calgary-Hays for bringing this forward.

We know that the police do not have the resources to deal with all the complaints they receive even if the information is reliable. There simply are not enough police officers, so this bill will create another investigative agency, staffed by trained investigators. The member had that explained to me the other day. They will be trained to deal with problem properties in neighbourhoods where illegal activities are occurring. Any tool to deal with the rise in crime in Alberta is welcome.

I'm happy to support Bill 212. I do have a question, though, about the first amendment that's suggested here, 1.1. I wonder if I could get that explained more clearly.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise today to contribute to the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 212, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. After a very positive second reading debate the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has moved amendments to the legislation in order to further strengthen the bill. With the proposal of amendment A the powers, duties, and functions of the director may be delegated to an employee under the administration of the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. This would allow the acting director to deal with the various requirements that may arise under the proposed act.

Mr. Chairman, the director plays a significant role in many aspects of Bill 212. Within the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act there are certain necessary functions that only the director can

accomplish. This role is vital to this bill. For example, complaints are given by concerned Albertans to the director. The director then assesses their validity. Section 3 of the act explains that complaints may be given to the director when a person believes their community is being adversely affected by activities within it or if property in the community is being habitually used for a specific purpose. The director is required to process the complaints by checking their validity and completeness before deciding the proper course of action. This will help ensure that those who have made complaints to the director will have their case heard as quickly as possible.

Amendment A, which has been proposed for Bill 212, allows for action to be taken by the acting director upon receiving the complaint. The transfer of duties will reduce the backlog of cases for the director upon returning to the position and ensures that concerns in the community are being dealt with in an expedient manner.

Under section 4 the director has the authority, upon receiving the complaint, to act in the best interest of the community. This includes investigating the complaint, sending a warning letter to the appropriate party, applying to the Court of Queen's Bench for a community safety order, and making a decision not to act in certain cases.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to the community safety order there is a provision which states that a complaint can be taken to court on an urgent basis. This may require the director to close the property from use and occupation on a specific day and keep it closed for up to 90 days.

A director can also apply to vary any order. Consequently, proposed amendment A would allow the director authority to be exercised when an order needs to be modified. This accommodates those who are indirectly affected by the actions taken by the director or the acting director. It can assist families who are not directly involved with the complaint to continue their daily routine. This may require further investigation, but the option to retain possession of their property will be available. Conversely, the acting director would have the authority to remove those remaining within the property upon further complaints.

While a community safety order may also be modified by a resident of the property, it must be sent to the director. This can discontinue an application for a complaint or the closure of a property. Furthermore, the modification of any order might need the appearance of the director in certain cases. It may also be necessary for a director or acting director to present the case. When the director deems the application for either a community safety order or an application for a variation frivolous or not in the public's interest, that would be a need for his or her presence in court. This would ensure that the director's position is heard and that the rationale of each case is presented.

The proposed amendment listed as amendment A provides an opportunity to address the concerns through the delegation of the director's powers and duties if need be.

Mr. Chairman, section 24 of the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act states that it is the responsibility of the director to handle property closures appropriately. Closure of a property once a community safety order is granted would require the director to be available to ensure that the copy of the order is both given to the respondent as well as being posted in a conspicuous place on the property. The director may enter the property to close it and keep it closed with or without the consent of the property owner.

Also, under Bill 212 the director would have the authority to take any measures in order to safely and effectively close the property and keep it closed. This includes ordering the occupants to vacate the premises, attaching locks or other secure devices, erecting fences, changing or terminating utility services, and/or making

alterations to the property to ensure that it is not a hazard while it is being closed.

3:40

Amendment A as proposed would allow for the employee under the authority of the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Safety to enact the safest possible solutions available under Bill 212 if the director was temporarily unavailable. According to the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act the director must ensure the necessary means to achieve that a property closure is met. If a director is not around when a property closure is scheduled, the process might not be handled smoothly.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the availability of a director is important to Bill 212 for information-gathering purposes. The investigation of any complaint would require the gathering of all necessary facts. Section 29 goes into details on the authority of the director with respect to information gathering. The director is authorized to collect data on those in question from various sources, including public bodies. Without a director present, access to the proper information would pose a challenge to the investigation. The ability of the director to gather crucial information gives the bill its strength. Through proposed amendment A, which allows for the delegation of the director's powers, duties, or functions, an investigation can be conducted thoroughly and accurately in all cases.

In conclusion, Bill 212 as proposed via amendment A has granted the authority of the director to be given to an employee under the administration of the minister. It gives the authoritative power necessary to continue with and carry out the objectives in Bill 212. By doing so, the director's role would always be available to provide safe communities for all Albertans.

The safety of communities throughout this province should not be put on hold for any circumstance no matter what may happen. Amendment A as proposed would not allow for security to be jeopardized. Mr. Chairman, I feel that Bill 212 is a positive piece of legislation and that the proposed amendment to section 1 will help strengthen it.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to address the amendment, 1.1. I have a concern with that in that I really would like a clarification from the mover of this amendment as to who exactly that employee could be. I think this is a very good bill, and I've seen effective community behaviours in helping to identify crack houses or whatever. However, I see a problem with the director and going to the employee, who, I assume, will be one of the government police. Then I'm not sure how the two would actually work with the police department that's in charge of that particular area. I think I would like a little clearer definition on how that exactly would work in terms of working with the police departments that are responsible.

When I hear that a complaint can be made to a director and then it's going to go here and then it's going to go there, in that time frame a good gang could have had that house sold and moved out in two seconds flat. I'm just wondering how quickly these directors and these employees would be able to operate because I really can see people moving in and out of these houses as rapidly as they need to so that they don't get caught.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak on Bill 212, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. Certainly, this bill, as

































