

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, March 8, 2007

1:30 p.m.

Date: 07/03/08

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome. I would ask that all hon. members remain standing after the prayer so that we may pay tribute to our former colleagues who have passed away since we were last in the House. Please join me in prayer.

As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, we ask for divine guidance so that our words and deeds may bring to all people of this great province hope, prosperity, and a vision for the future. Amen.

Mr. Arthur Soetaert

April 14, 1913, to September 14, 2006

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Thursday, September 14, 2006, Arthur Joseph Soetaert passed away. Mr. Soetaert was elected in the 13th Legislature, June 29, 1955, representing the St. Albert constituency for the Liberal Party. Mr. Soetaert served until June 18, 1959. During his term of office Mr. Soetaert served on the select standing committees on Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; Municipal Law; Privileges and Elections; Public Accounts; and Railways, Telephones and Irrigation.

Mr. Bryan Strong

December 24, 1946, to December 25, 2006

The Speaker: On Monday, December 25, 2006, Bryan Melvin Strong passed away. Mr. Strong was first elected on May 8, 1986, and served until March 20, 1989, representing the constituency of St. Albert for the New Democratic Party. During his term of office Mr. Strong served on the select standing committees on Public Accounts and Public Affairs.

Dr. Kenneth Paproski

January 17, 1931, to January 25, 2007

The Speaker: On Thursday, January 25, 2007, Dr. Kenneth Robert Howard Paproski passed away. Dr. Paproski was first elected in 1971 and served until 1982. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Edmonton-Kingsway for the Progressive Conservative Party. During his term of office Dr. Paproski served on several committees: Public Accounts; Law, Law Amendments and Regulations; Public Affairs, Agriculture and Education; Private Bills; Law and Regulations; Public Affairs; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. In addition, Dr. Paproski served on two legislative committees, one dealing with the Workers' Compensation Act and Professions and Occupations.

Mr. Arthur Dixon

December 1, 1919, to February 5, 2007

The Speaker: Mr. Arthur Johnson Dixon passed away on Monday, February 5, 2007. Mr. Dixon was first elected in 1952 and served until 1975. During his years of service he represented the constituencies of Calgary, Calgary South-East, Calgary-South, and Calgary-Millican for the Social Credit Party. During his term of office Mr. Dixon served on several committees: Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; Law Amendments; Municipal Law; Public Accounts; and Railways, Telephones and Irrigation.

Mr. Dixon served as Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1955 to 1963 and as Speaker from 1963 to 1972. During Mr. Dixon's tenure as Speaker he served on the Standing Committee on Public Affairs, Agriculture and Education; Special Committee to Arrange the Area Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; Special Committee to Revise Rules 74 to 104 of the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta; and the Special Committee to Select an Ombudsman.

With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burden of public office. Family members of Mr. Soetaert, Dr. Paproski, and Mr. Dixon are with us today in the Speaker's gallery. Our prayers are with them.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember hon. member Art Soetaert, hon. member Bryan Strong, hon. member Ken Paproski, and hon. member Arthur Dixon as you may have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly an individual that is seated in your gallery, Mr. Rick Hansen. Rick is a great Canadian whose efforts have brought not only international recognition and accolades but also meaningful improvements to the quality of life of persons with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities.

Given the number of his achievements, I will highlight only a few here today. He has wheeled around the globe, developed a foundation to assist those with spinal cord injuries, and this evening Rick will be honoured by the CPA with the Christopher Reeve award to recognize his outstanding leadership and contribution to the community of persons with spinal cord injury and other physical disabilities. My wife, Marie, will be presenting him with the award this evening. Later this year he will be inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame.

He is accompanied by a number of guests: Kent Hehr, Marlin Styner, Gary McPherson and his wife, Val, and Dr. Karim Fouad. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they all receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's an honour for me today to introduce to you guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery as well. These guests are family members of our former colleagues who have passed away since we last sat. Former MLA Arthur Soetaert is represented by his son Art Soetaert and two daughters, Lorraine St. Laurent and Claudette Meunier. If they would rise, please.

Mrs. Louise Paproski, widow of Dr. Kenneth Paproski, former MLA, is here with her daughter Marion Johnson, son-in-law Rod Johnson, and grandchildren Shea, Owen, Genevieve, and Roarke Johnson. If they would rise, please.

Mrs. Marguerite Dixon, widow of Mr. Art Dixon, former MLA and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, is here with several family members: son Donald and Janet Dixon and their daughter Emily, daughter-in-law Mrs. Susie Dixon, granddaughter Melanie Dixon, brother-in-law Burnell and Leona Perrault, nephew Steven and Crystal Perrault, and nephew Dan Galbraith. With the family is former Member of the Legislative Assembly Dennis Anderson, who represented Calgary-Currie, a long-time family friend. As I ask

them to rise, I would like to point out to all members that when Mr. Dixon was the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, his family would come from Calgary to live in the Speaker's suite. His son Donald, who is here today, must have been just a little gaffer at that time, so he must have pitter-pattered through the Speaker's suite in times gone by. If the Dixon family would rise now.

1:40

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a fellow Official Opposition House Leader. Seated in your gallery is Gary McRobb, who is the MLA for Kluane in Yukon. He was first elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in 1996 and re-elected in 2000, 2002, and 2006. He is the Liberal caucus critic for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Department of Highways and Public Works, the Yukon Development Corporation, and the Yukon Energy Corporation. As I said, he is the Official Opposition House Leader. I would ask Mr. McRobb to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Alberta Assembly.

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you Mr. Brent Rathgeber, also seated in your gallery. Mr. Rathgeber is well known to all members of this fine Assembly as he served in this Legislature as the Member for Edmonton-Calder from 2001-2004. But that is not the reason he is here today. Mr. Rathgeber has recently been nominated as the candidate for the Edmonton-St. Albert Conservative association, and he will be running in the upcoming federal election and, I imagine, equally competently representing his constituents there. I would like to ask Mr. Rathgeber to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Adam Kozakiewicz, who has served the members of this Assembly for the past seven years as a systems analyst. For those of us that find the world of computers and BlackBerries and blueberries and Palms and Bluetooth gadgets a little bit challenging, as I do, Adam was always there for all of us to make sure that these machines worked well for us and in many cases in spite of us. We will certainly miss his talents and good humour as he is moving on to a new position with the Bank of Montreal in Vegreville as a financial planner. I would like to ask Adam to rise in the members' gallery to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly on behalf of my colleague from Athabasca-Redwater a group from the Thorhild school. There are about 15 students, I believe, and they're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Mike Popowicz. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

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

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly the Trinity Christian school group, who is the only group of school kids that has been able to come to the Legislature from my constituency year after year, so I'd like to thank them and their teacher, Cheryl Barnard, for that. As well, they informed me that they are staying overnight, so they have many parent helpers to help them with that: Dan Dooley, Cori Janz, Sheila Muirhead, Wendy Clay, Kent Blanton, Sheryl Anderton, Steve Miller, Joanne Smart, and Paul Wilson. I'd like to have them rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Loughheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a grade 10 class from Strathcona Christian Academy. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Doug Zook. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour also to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students from the Rimbey elementary school. They're accompanied by their teacher and five parent helpers. The parent helpers are Ms Bridget Wright, Ms Suzanne Hanley, Ms Janet Burghardt, Ms Starla Boehnert, and Mr. Brent Stutheit. Their teacher is Ms Cathy Coers. This class has been here all week participating in the School at the Legislature, and they've enjoyed themselves immensely. They're seated in one of the galleries, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.
Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the gentleman who maintains my constituency office. Jordan takes all of my constituency calls, and he's my right hand and my left hand, particularly when I'm here in Edmonton. I'd like to ask my constituency manager, Jordan Lien, who is seated in the members' gallery, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier already introduced Marlin Styner to us, but he neglected to introduce his spouse. As he well knows, we don't do these jobs without the support of significant others and spouses. I'm very pleased to introduce Diane Gramlich to the Assembly, who travelled with Marlin to all the leadership candidates, raising the issues of the 332,000 Disability Coalition so effectively. I am proud that both of them reside in the Red Deer-South constituency and attend faithfully Red Deer-South constituency board meetings for the PC Association. So welcome.

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a constituent of Drayton Valley-Calmar, His Worship Darren Aldous. Darren is the mayor of Breton. He's also a VP of the AUMA, chair of the environment and sustainability committee, and

chair of the upcoming AUMA energy efficiency conference, which is on April 19 and 20 at the River Cree Marriott. I would ask Mayor Aldous to please rise – he's seated behind me, in the members' gallery – and I'd ask all members to welcome him.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a first-year law student at the University of Alberta. She is shadowing me today. She is part of the Women's Law Forum, who is interested in increasing the leadership of women in public life. She is also the mother of three children, ages one, two, and three. I would ask Sheryl Savard to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the 28 members of the Yellowhead Tribal College seated in the public gallery. Under the wise tutelage of Mrs. Linda Anderson they're here to watch the proceedings today along with question period. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you three guests that I have in the members' gallery today. The first is Mr. David Keto, who is leading the support secretariat for the Royalty Review Panel. The second is Mr. Gary Horan, who is a former president of the Alberta Alliance Party and a close friend of mine. The third is Mr. Jordan Cleland, who is the government relations person for the Workers' Compensation Board and a former executive assistant of mine. I would ask all three to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: As a footnote to the Premier's introduction of Mr. Rick Hansen today, it was 10 years ago, in 1997, that Mr. Hansen was invited to speak to the hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. At that time he came to Alberta to give thanks to the people of Alberta on the 10th anniversary of his Man in Motion World Tour. By being given permission from the members to participate on the floor, he became only the third person in the history of Alberta to address the Members of the Legislative Assembly. So now, 10 years later, he returns.

Welcome to Premier Stelmach

The Speaker: Hon. members, I sent a note in the last number of days advising the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the third party and other members that at this point in time, because of the unique situation that occurred December 14, 2006, with the swearing-in of a new Premier in the province of Alberta, probably this would be an opportune day for hon. members, if they wished to convey greetings, congratulations, and best wishes, those thoughts, to the new Premier, this would be a grand opportunity.

A number of members have advised me, and I will recognize whatever member wants to participate today – time management, of course, is word management – recognizing that I will give greater leverage to the leaders of the two parties than I will other members. I'm not suggesting that other members aren't as important; it's just

that this is one of those unique occasions. I'll recognize first the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition and then the leader of the third party. Then other members who wish to notify me, just send me a little note or catch my eye.

1:50

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate this opportunity. Welcoming a new Premier to this House is a rare privilege – I might argue too rare – but I will say that I am absolutely delighted to offer the distinguished individual now in that chair the warm greetings of the entire Alberta Liberal caucus.

Mr. Speaker, if someone had told me a year ago that the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville would one day serve as the Premier of this province, I wouldn't have believed it, to be honest. But then it wasn't long before the rumours started to circulate: watch out for Ed. Those rumours have proven to be very true. Sure enough, when the ballots of the PC Party leadership race were counted, a soft-spoken farmer from Lamont was chosen as Alberta's 13th Premier. My congratulations. For his tenacity, his hard work, and his obvious efforts to reach out to thousands of Albertans we commend the new Premier. It was an incredible race, and he certainly earned the victory.

The new Premier inherits a challenging job, and we commend him for taking on such an immense responsibility. As Leader of the Official Opposition and the Alberta Liberal caucus one of my duties is to help the Premier serve the people of this province to the best of his ability. Sometimes, of course, that will mean asking some pretty tough questions because, after all, the people of Alberta have tough questions to ask. For example, Mr. Speaker, when I recently stopped at the Donut Mill in Red Deer's Gasoline Alley – probably everybody knows it – I had lunch and, of course, a donut. A man who was also there – and he was from Wainwright – walked up to me, and he asked some pretty pointed questions about what he perceived as the uncontrolled growth in this province. Just a few days ago at a town hall meeting in Grande Prairie people were almost in tears because of their concerns with finding affordable housing and proper health care. Folks in Drumheller, we know, are genuinely worried about southern Alberta's water supply, and they're concerned that it may not be there in the future.

The people of this province are demanding more from their leaders, Mr. Speaker, and so honesty demands that we let the new Premier know that the Alberta Liberal caucus will be speaking out for disenfranchised and disappointed Albertans with all the strength that we can muster. Albertans are expecting a lot from their elected representatives, most of all from their Premier. They want us to protect the environment. They want us to come up with a plan for long-term fiscal sustainability. They want democratic renewal. The people of Alberta want a more open, accountable, and transparent government, and they want to move Alberta forward to a sustainable future. The Alberta Liberal caucus has solid plans to achieve these goals, and we hope the Premier will work with us to those ends.

So to the Premier: congratulations, good luck, and may you enjoy a productive and rewarding time in this House. We are all of us here for Albertans. Let's make sure that they have a government that they can be proud of.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity that you've given to us to provide greetings and congratulations to the new Premier. I will save some of my political comments for question period and debate.

The Premier is a man for whom I have a great deal of respect. I believe he has acquitted himself with integrity and honour in this House. He is a friendly person, not a person who places partisanship above the normal human relations that we all enjoy.

He is the first Premier of Ukrainian heritage in the province of Alberta. I have many people of Ukrainian heritage in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I can tell you that they are very proud of the Premier, but I remind them that he represents the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and not Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Well, they're all pretty good New Democrats, I think.

I think it's also important at this time to have someone who comes from a farming background, someone who understands the difficulties and the struggles that farmers have gone through in the last number of years in this province. As the Premier undertakes this tremendous responsibility, I wish him well. As the last Premier once said to me, I wish you good luck but not too much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise to congratulate the Premier on winning his party's leadership to become the leader and the Premier of our province. Albertans are renewed with hope as they move forward with the desire to be governed with integrity and transparency. May you be blessed with the wisdom and the courage to pass legislation and regulations that ensure equality and equal opportunity for all Albertans, resulting in an improvement in their quality of life.

As you have stated, Albertans work hard and deserve to enjoy the fruits of their labour. They are generous and give back to their communities. We commend you for your recognition of this and your statement yesterday in the media room that charitable organizations know the needs of their communities better than government, and they spend and stretch the dollars better than government. Albertans also know that they serve the people better than political parties. I ask the Premier to ensure that his new tax credit for donating to Alberta charities is better than the current credit for donating to political parties.

Albertans do not wish to be dependent on and grateful for government programs and handouts. They desire to be governed by laws and regulations that protect, not limit, their freedoms and independence. I know that the Premier understands that and has spoken a great deal about the strength and the integrity of Albertans as a whole.

Mr. Premier, you can count on the Alliance for help and support to make Alberta better, to help our families help themselves to be strong and free, *Fortis et Liber*.

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise, proud to raise the issues as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the status of women . . .

The Speaker: We're in greetings to the Premier section. Okay? We'll come to you later.

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can hardly resist just thanking and congratulating our Premier.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to rise and wish our new Premier all the very best. On behalf of the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I, too, would like to welcome our new Premier into the House as Premier. In my case it's also a case of welcoming an old friend and colleague of a time that goes back to municipal days, when we were both councillors.

I can truly say that the calls I get from my constituency office reflect that Albertans from my part of the province are truly and solidly behind our new Premier and wish you all the best as the 13th Premier of our wonderful province. Together, with your leadership I'm confident that we'll even build a better province and future for our children. I wish you many successful years as Premier and winner of many elections to come.

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

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, as Deputy Chair of Committees and the MLA for Calgary-McCall I extend my sincere congratulations to the Premier for his successful leadership campaign, his victory, and for being sworn in as Alberta's 13th Premier. I wish him the very best in his term as our Premier and the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta.

People who have known our new Premier have bestowed on him numerous titles, such as Steady Eddie, Honest Ed, a man of integrity, a sincere person, et cetera. He is indeed worthy of all of these honours, and I'm convinced that he will serve Albertans well as their Premier for many decades to come.

Mr. Premier, congratulations.

2:00

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pride that I stand here today to welcome our new Alberta Premier. Welcome, Mr. Premier. In the words of Chelsea Stanley from my constituency: What d'ya at? Now, that is Newfoundlander: hi, how are you, and welcome. In my constituency of Edmonton-Manning there are many Newfoundlanders who have become Albertans. There are, indeed, many new Albertans from all parts of Canada and from other lands the world over. On behalf of all of them, sir, I wish you welcome. They all wish you well, and I know that you have their best interests in mind.

There are also many long-term Albertans in Edmonton-Manning. Many have moved over the years from Two Hills, from Mundare, from Vilna, and from all over northern Alberta. There is a strong Ukrainian-Canadian and Polish-Canadian heritage in the multicultural milieu of northeast Edmonton neighbourhoods. Folks are proud of that. Part of the area is sometimes called Little Kiev. Many are proud of you, sir, being the first Ukrainian-Canadian Premier of our great province of Alberta. I wrote you a letter when you were elected that my dear mother would be making a pot of her best borscht in heaven to celebrate your election. I'm sure that she is happy today. I wish you well. Congratulations and God bless.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add congratulations here today from the Wetaskiwin-Camrose constituency. It's clear from the throne speech of yesterday that we are taking a new and fresh direction in this province, and this is all under your direction and leadership. As the Member for Wetaskiwin-

Camrose I look forward to working with you to realize your agenda and dreams for our province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to briefly congratulate and warmly welcome our new Premier, and I rise in two capacities: first of all, as a person of Ukrainian ancestry myself to convey how deeply proud and honoured our constituency of Canadians of Ukrainian heritage is on this occasion to welcome and salute the first-ever person of Ukrainian ancestry to occupy the chair of premiership in Alberta, and secondly, on behalf of the Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations I just know that this is a very positive move that will help solidify those relationships as well. So congratulations. [Remarks in Ukrainian] May God bless you, guide you, and keep you in good health. [As submitted]

The Speaker: Hon. Premier, would you like to respond?

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first do want to say how much I appreciate your recognizing me yesterday and, of course, the kind words expressed by yourself. Also my thanks to the Leader of the Official Opposition and to the third party for their welcoming remarks and to all other members in the Assembly.

To the Leader of the Opposition, certainly we'll take your offer to help. I always have had respect for the opposition. There is a role to play, of course, in democracy in terms of the debate in this House. As family members observe the proceedings here today, those family members of those elected members of this Assembly that have departed us, my goal – and I'm sure you share the same goal – is that we win back the respect for elected people in this province that our predecessors had.

I am honoured to serve Albertans, Mr. Speaker, as their Premier. I really still struggle for those words to express how humbling it is that the people of this great province gave me this tremendous opportunity, their confidence, their trust, and most importantly their vote to lead this government and really represent the interests of all Albertans.

I'm honoured to lead such a tremendously talented caucus, behind me and across the way, into the Third Session of the 26th Legislature. I'm well served front and back. We do have a large agenda in front of us, and I look forward to working with Albertans both inside and outside this Chamber to achieve the goals that I have given this government.

Just a comment to the leader of the third party, who mentioned my Ukrainian heritage. I just heard the other day that now on a regular basis we'll have perogies and kubasa on the Legislature cafeteria menu.

Mr. Mason: Hold the sour cream.

Mr. Stelmach: Yeah. We'll try and reduce the calories.

I have a tremendous respect for this office and, of course, for the role of elected officials, and I'm just looking forward to the next number of years. I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition may want to have an introduction much earlier than I would like in this House in terms of a new Premier, but really this is what it's all about: working together to serve Albertans.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would close my brief comments and await my first question as the Premier of the province of Alberta.

head:

Ministerial Statements

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

International Women's Day

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a privilege to rise today to honour women everywhere as the member who is responsible on the government side for the status of women and to recognize that in this the 30th international anniversary year the theme of the year is Ending Violence against Women.

Since Adam and Eve women in society have been equal partners in life, fostering families and sharing responsibility for improving this planet. Our ancestors, aboriginal women, First Nations and Métis women among the settlers who migrated from other developed countries have built an Alberta with their passion, their hope, and their experience and built on our capacity to become a province rich in heritage and culture and made us an amazing place in a leading nation. Women have broken land, have farmed, have fed their families, have welded, have counselled, have taught, have supported medical circumstances, and have earned their place: active in their careers, in their vocations, missions, as parents, and as community leaders. Today nearly half of the self-employed in Alberta are women. They are entrepreneurs with wisdom, commitment, ingenuity, and energy.

In this Legislature on all sides of the House we are sadly reminded that while so much is right with the women of our province, some things are still terribly wrong. Seven per cent of Canadian women still suffer violence; 24 per cent of aboriginal women have suffered violence by their spousal partner at least once, and 10 per cent of Alberta women throughout the province have suffered as a result of the experience of living with an abusive partner. Our Premier and other champions in this House continue to advocate and place resources to eradicate bullying and violence, but it is up to all of us to do more. As a mother I taught my sons that the greatest gift they could give to their children was to love and cherish their wives. We must cherish and love all others and continue to uphold the culture of respect for one another.

Today as we celebrate all women – our pioneers that have gone before, those present among us today, and all in our society – we resolve to build and nurture all men, all women, and all Albertans in a manner which assures eradication of violence and a stronger, safer place for our children and the children of future generations.

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

2:10

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Madam Minister. Those were kind words and heartfelt.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to celebrate International Women's Day, but it's tough to be properly jubilant when women face so many challenges. There are certainly many women to celebrate in Alberta: breast cancer survivors, the volunteers who serve as the hidden backbone of our economy, the barely acknowledged people all around us who teach and sling hash and weld and clean and crunch numbers and drive trucks and take care of our kids. These women show leadership and courage every day. They deserve to be celebrated, perhaps especially so in Alberta, where women have to be so self-reliant.

From 1986 to its premature closure we had an arm's-length Advisory Council on Women's Issues in Alberta, charged to help get women fully involved in the life of the province. We had a Women's Secretariat, a branch full of people working on women's

policy issues. Now we have one valiant woman working away in the corner of a different department. From a council and a secretariat to a desk.

Our health workforce, overwhelmingly female, is struggling with recruitment and retention issues, and a significant portion of this workforce is looking at getting out. This possibility has massive consequences for policymakers and citizens alike. Our precious, not-for-profit charitable and volunteer sector, also overwhelmingly staffed by women, has been eroded, downsized, and downloaded upon for years, leaving it in a very fragile state.

Child care: another issue which disproportionately affects women. We need spaces created. According to one source we have 80,000 women who have to or want to work and cannot find child care spaces for their children. As for the child care workers themselves, again overwhelmingly women, they perform a vital job for pitiful wages.

Finally, violence against women. If there's a jurisdiction anywhere in the world with the ability to tackle this issue once and for all, it's Alberta. But we still seem to be stuck in the Dark Ages on this front.

So, yes, I'd like to celebrate International Women's Day in Alberta, but I think that, instead, I'll just celebrate Alberta's women and their determination to valiantly struggle forward in the face of overwhelming obstacles.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Might we have the consent of the Assembly to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to participate on behalf of the third party in the House?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, I thank you and the House for this opportunity to join with my other colleagues to say a few words on this very important day, International Women's Day. This is a day on which we should celebrate the accomplishments of women while recognizing that our society is still rife with inequalities. Last year I spoke about the persistent wage gap between men and women as well as the unacceptably high number of women who were turned away from women's shelters because they were full. These concerns persist today in Alberta and around the world.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women cautions in its message commemorating International Women's Day that all of the progress we have made can be destroyed through continuing violence against women. Violence against women is deeply rooted in structures of gender inequality. Ending violence against women requires changing our individual attitudes and breaking through barriers of culture and tradition to find nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts in personal and public life.

Violence against women is made more insidious because it so often goes unpunished. Global figures from the United Nations show us that women are disproportionately targeted. One out of every three women has been beaten or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Domestic violence is the largest form of abuse of women world-wide, irrespective of religion, culture, ethnicity, education, and class. Mr. Speaker, this House must commit to taking action to end impunity to violence against women and girls.

Alberta and Canada like to take pride in the progress we have made towards eliminating inequality from our society, but I fear that some of us have become too complacent. Last year in one of the first acts in government the federal Conservatives cut the budget of

the office of the Status of Women by 40 per cent and closed 12 of the 16 regional offices. These offices helped women's groups work their way through government funding processes and helped fund research and resource development related to women's issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I invite all Albertans to join us in celebrating International Women's Day, celebrating past advances, and committing to fighting for justice and equality for all women. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Are the members prepared to provide an opportunity to the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner to participate? Any opposed?

The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to stand and to celebrate the 30th anniversary of International Women's Day. Each of us owes our life to the women of our community for our birth and for their nurturing and loving care in our early years. We are truly indebted to the women of our society. They exemplify the best of human traits, those of kindness, generosity, caring, and loving, many of those whom only a mother could love.

Albertans have truly been blessed with stalwart women who have fought the good fight for all Albertans and Canadians as a whole, such special women as the Famous Five and groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and REAL Women, just to mention a few. We are truly blessed with the women of our families, our communities, our province, and our country. We could not go on without them. They are truly capable of doing it all, and we are indebted to them.

We must ensure equality for all of our citizens, male and female, and continue to try and improve their quality of life here in the province of Alberta.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal and Official Opposition.

Royalty Review Panel

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The review of the province's royalty rates may be the single most important issue this government confronts under this Premier. The makeup of the review panel is just as interesting for who is not on it as for who is. It is reasonable for industry to have a voice on the panel, but Albertans are asking me why other groups do not. To the Premier: can the Premier explain to the farmers of Alberta, whose land and livelihoods are so often affected by the activities of the petroleum industry, why they do not deserve a representative on the panel when industry does?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the issue of a royalty review came forward during the leadership campaign in the province of Alberta, and I made a commitment to ensure that all royalties – starting with oil sands, conventional oil and gas, and coal-bed methane – be reviewed in a very open and transparent manner and that information to be then put on the table for all Albertans to see. If our royalty regime is fair, there will be comparisons made to other jurisdictions. We need that information to communicate that to Albertans, and they will have the information to make their own decision.

Dr. Taft: Well, I was hoping for more, Mr. Speaker: an answer. So I will repeat the question to the Premier. Can the Premier explain to the farmers of Alberta, whose land and livelihoods are so often affected by the activities of the petroleum industry, why they do not

deserve a representative on the review panel when industry does?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I believe the leader maybe doesn't have all the information here. I was going to say confused but not from the point of view of saying that he doesn't understand. There is legislation in place that protects the landowner in terms of the Surface Rights Act and land compensation for the entry of the oil companies onto a farmer's land or, quite frankly, onto any private land. This is a review of the royalty regime. This is a review of what we receive as Albertans, all equal shareholders in the resource that we own, and how that is calculated in terms of the resource royalty. So those are two separate issues.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that environmental issues concerning the activity of the petroleum industry are of such high concern and that royalties could be for example structured to encourage better environmental activities, can the Premier explain to the people of Alberta why no one with environmental expertise deserves to be on the panel?

2:20

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a review of the royalty regime. All of the other issues, especially with respect to environment, are a separate discussion. In fact, our ministers of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development are mandated to bring forward plans to ensure a very clean environment for the next generation. Quite frankly, it's not only the oil and gas industry that we have to pay attention to but all other industry, including agriculture, to make sure that we do protect the environment for the future generation.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Leadership in trying times requires good judgment, yet several times the Premier's judgment seems to be lacking. When it comes to the royalty review, the Premier failed to take steps to ensure that the panelists were free from conflicts of interest. Within hours of the panel members being made public, it came to light that one of them owns millions of dollars of stock options in an oil sands company: clearly a blatant conflict of interest. My question is to the Premier. What has the Premier done to address the conflict of interest of the member of the panel who has a multimillion dollar stake in a major oil company?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, all members on the royalty review committee have extensive experience in a number of areas. I can't list to you the names of all the individuals or their backgrounds, but I can certainly allow the Minister of Finance to give the background on the review panel.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the review panel are six individuals that are very classy, intelligent individuals. We have three economists. We have a former president of Alberta-Pacific who has worked with environmental groups and has worked in the lumber industry for the last 30 years. We have a gentleman who was in the information technology business and, unbeknownst to me at the time, has actually done a considerable amount of work on finances with regard to oil companies. Lastly, we're very

privileged to have a gentleman by the name of Sam Spanglet, who is the former vice-president of Shell and two years ago was the executive of the year worldwide for Shell International.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of expertise is what we're looking for, but on top of that we have asked each and every one of the members of the committee to swear an official oath that they will not do anything that will benefit them, that they will not talk about what is occurring, that they will not speak about what is occurring in this particular review, which is an incredibly important element of this deliberation.

Dr. Taft: Business as usual, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: given that last week, well after they were appointed, all the panelists were asked to disclose their conflicts of interest to the government on the panel, will the Premier do the open and accountable thing and tell the people of Alberta what those conflicts of interest were?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't even be debating this issue of the composition of the panel if it wasn't for my insistence to ensure that we have a very thorough public review of the royalty regime in this province, and that's what we're going to get at the end of this.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier again: can the Premier assure Albertans that none of the royalty review panelists have business interests that will be affected by the decisions of the panel that they're serving on?

Mr. Stelmach: I can assure this House that the review will be done in a very open, transparent manner to ensure that there are no self-interests in terms of the results that end up on the table for all Albertans to observe in terms of whether the royalty regime is fair to all Albertans. Remember, we are all equal shareholders in that resource.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's first few months as leader have been tainted by questions about his commitment to openness and transparency. They're not going to diminish after today. Though he talks the talk, his decision to hold a fundraiser where individuals could purchase time with the Premier and his refusal to disclose a list of donors to his leadership campaign are clear indications that he doesn't necessarily walk the walk. With the announcement of the Royalty Review Panel questions have arisen regarding the relationship between panel members and the government. To the Premier: given that the Premier only released a partial list of his leadership campaign donors, will the Premier tell this Assembly and all Albertans whether or not any of the review panelists provided cash in kind or other contributions to his leadership campaign?

Mr. Stelmach: In fact, in terms of the leadership campaign I don't know what the Liberals have in mind in terms of what kind of disclosure or how much involvement a candidate has in raising funds. There was a committee structured that receives campaign funds. It's actually a company that was enacted to receive campaign funds. It's their responsibility. In absence of any rules by the party in terms of the campaign, we had to make rules ourselves in terms

of how funds were accepted. The committee then accepted whatever donations were made.

I just want to say this, Mr. Speaker. There's such a concern about the disclosure. Well, a lot of those that didn't disclose were like \$25, \$50, you know, donations to the campaign. But here's the thing. We will have a lobbyist registry in place that will identify any person in this province that wants to lobby the government. Also, as soon as we get the information technology in place, we'll be able to track what money goes to any person in this province of Alberta through the blue book. So we've got it now, Mr. Speaker, on both sides of the spectrum. We'll make sure that is very open and transparent, and Albertans will see not only who's lobbying government but who is getting money from the other end.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will the Premier tell this Assembly and all Albertans whether or not any of the companies the panelists are connected to contributed to his leadership campaign?

Mr. Stelmach: You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't know because I didn't follow who gave money to the campaign. It's a committee structure. It was a company name, and that's their role. I'm not involved in collecting funds in terms of the campaign nor any other leadership candidates here.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that the minister responsible for the Royalty Review Panel hasn't released a list of his leadership donors, will the Premier direct the minister to disclose whether or not any of the review panelists or the companies they work with contributed to this minister's leadership campaign?

Mr. Stelmach: As I said before . . .

Dr. Taft: Open and accountable.

Mr. Stelmach: Yeah, and we've moved more in the last 60 days than you ever will in this Assembly. I can tell you that. We're going to have the lobbyist registry. Every person that receives any kind of money from this government will be in the blue book. That will be on the Internet. Any Albertan can pull it up. This is more transparency and openness than has been seen in this province for years, well ahead of where the opposition is today.

Speaker's Ruling Matters Referred to Ethics Commissioner

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair allowed that last series of questions because the final aspect of the question had to do with a specific contribution from a specific company to somebody's campaign, but I want to draw to the attention of all hon. members the Conflicts of Interest Act section 24(1). It says, "Any person may request, in writing, that the Ethics Commissioner investigate any matter respecting an alleged breach of this Act by a Member." Then 24(3) says, "A Member may request, in writing, that the Ethics Commissioner investigate any matter respecting an alleged breach of this Act by the Member." Then 24(6) says, "Where a matter has been referred to the Ethics Commissioner under subsection (1), (3) . . . neither the Legislative Assembly nor a committee of the Assembly shall inquire into the matter."

Now, one of the due diligence things a Speaker does prior to opening of a session is to contact the Ethics Commissioner and ask the question: does the Ethics Commissioner have a file on any member with respect to anything? The Ethics Commissioner advised me that the Ethics Commissioner had received a letter from the leader of the third party asking the Ethics Commissioner to undertake an investigation into campaign contributions. Following that, the Ethics Commissioner had received a letter from the Leader of the Official Opposition, asking the Ethics Commissioner to do one and the same thing.

So I've been advised by an officer of the Legislative Assembly, in this case the Ethics Commissioner, that two members have asked for a review. The Ethics Commissioner is taking a review, and if I read section 24(6), it says: "Where a matter has been referred to the Ethics Commissioner under subsection (1)." Section 24(3) says, "A Member may request, in writing, that the Ethics Commissioner investigate any matter respecting an alleged breach of this Act by the Member." Then it says in 24(6), "Neither the Legislative Assembly nor a committee of the Assembly shall inquire into the matter."

So we're on the edge with some of these questions, but I think I've clarified the whole thing. We'll wait, perhaps, for the Ethics Commissioner to get back to us all.

The leader of the third party, please.

2:30 Employment Standards

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week we learned that employers in the tar sands are refusing to hire skilled Albertan and Canadian building trades workers because they belong to a union. In fact, the IBEW, a legitimate union, has over 1,000 skilled tradesmen waiting for jobs because this government and the federal government allow employers to bring in cheap foreign labour. This government's labour policies ensure that unionized workers are not only passed over but can be fired because their first language is French, in order to make room for temporary foreign workers, many of whom are supplied by the companies with translators. This question is to the Premier. Will the Premier explain to the thousands of qualified, out-of-work Albertan and Canadian workers why they are being overlooked for jobs in favour of temporary foreign workers?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, our policy is Albertans first; secondly, other Canadians that can fill these vacant positions in all industry; and thirdly, if we can't find enough people to fill all the positions, then we'll look to other parts of the world. Of course, part of our commitment, when we say Albertans first, is to put more resources so that we can attract and encourage more participation from our Métis and First Nations in many job opportunities in the province of Alberta. Really, that is government policy, and that's what we're working on.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thousands of Albertans waiting for work.

Will the Premier commit to reopen negotiations with the federal government to amend the agreement governing temporary foreign workers in order to require employers to clearly demonstrate that no qualified Albertan or Canadian worker, unionized or not, is available for work before any application for temporary foreign workers is approved?

Mr. Stelmach: All that I know in terms of the negotiations, Mr.

Speaker, is what our minister of employment is doing now in terms of negotiating with the federal government in a number of programs. I had a difficult time hearing your question because there was more chatter from the bench here. You know, I don't make any comments when other members are asking a question. I just ask for the same respect. That's all I ask.

Mr. Mason: M. Speaker, pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement permet à Suncor de virer un travailleur canadien syndiqué avec 25 années d'expérience dans l'industrie simplement parce que sa langue maternelle est le français? I will provide a translation. Why has the government allowed Suncor to fire a unionized Canadian worker with 25 years' experience because his first language is French?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, our minister will respond to the very specific issue raised by the member.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, an issue like this would be dealt with by the Human Rights Commission. My colleague the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture has that portfolio, but I will say this. A situation between a private company and their employee, the particular details of which I am not aware, is not something which I am prepared to address in this House. It is not part of the legislation, but the Employment Standards Code. . .

Mr. Mason: Oh, so discrimination is allowed by your government.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we are neither allowing nor disallowing anything the member opposite is alleging. We're saying simply that the Employment Standards Code covers termination in specific circumstances such as maternity or paternal leave. We also talk about termination pay provisions in our legislation, but the circumstance that the employee has challenged and that has been referenced in the media today is something that I'm sure that my colleague the minister who is in charge of human rights may wish to further comment on.

Mr. Goudreau: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly it's my pleasure to provide some comments as minister responsible for the Human Rights Commission. This morning we were made aware of the situation with Suncor and the employee, and we are in the process of trying to find out both sides of the story. We're only hearing the one side of the story. Certainly, we will encourage the individual, if he felt totally discriminated against because of a particular language issue, to deal specifically with the Human Rights Commission.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Caucus Funding

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, congratulations to the Premier. He is listening to and has shown a desire to govern the people of Alberta with fairness, integrity, and transparency. He has promised to be open, accountable, fiscally responsible, and inclusive. We commend him and his minister of restructuring and government efficiency on reducing cabinet to 18 ministers. This is a great start. In the throne speech he assured the people of Alberta that he would honour and respect the trust that people have in the MLA they have elected to represent their best interests. [interjections] Maybe you could ask your own people to be quiet. A little respect. Does the Premier believe that every voter in Alberta is of equal value and weight?

Mr. Stelmach: Did he say "every voter"?

The Speaker: Hon. Premier, I recognize that there was a bit of chitter-chatter going on. I think the question essentially was: does the Premier recognize every voter in Alberta to be of equal value and weight?

Mr. Stelmach: Every Albertan. A voter is 18 plus, but there are many Albertans that are younger than 18 years, the age of majority. So they're all important.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, would the Premier please explain to Albertans how he justifies rewarding some caucuses with funding of over \$5.50 per vote while another caucus is funded only 80 cents per vote received?

Speaker's Ruling Decisions of Members' Services Committee

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that that has absolutely nothing to do with a decision of the government or the leader of the government. That is purely a matter of the Members' Services Committee, which is constituted by this Assembly, elected by this Assembly. That is a question that's out of order.

Hon. member, proceed to your third one.

Mr. Hinman: Well, I would respectfully disagree with that.

The Speaker: Sorry. Sit down. Sit down. You can't disagree with the law you passed. Look in the mirror. You made the law. Yeah, you made the law.

Now proceed with your third question, on a subject that deserves the merit and attention of this Assembly.

Caucus Funding (continued)

Mr. Hinman: Will the Premier treat every Alberta voter equally and reduce government spending and improve democratic representation by funding every party recognized by Elections Alberta with an elected MLA with a caucus funding of \$1 per vote received?

The Speaker: Well, once again that question is out of order.

The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Teachers' Labour Dispute

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is about the quality of education. Nine thousand four hundred students are currently out of school in the Parkland school district as a result of a teachers' strike, and no end is in sight. Parents and students want to know where the government is on this issue. To the Minister of Education: what steps has the minister taken to ensure a fair and swift resolution to this dispute in Parkland?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, the parents were here at the Legislature yesterday expressing their concern about the Parkland strike. My colleague and I met with the parents outside and then a couple of hours later met with parents inside, joined by the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert

and the Member for Stony Plain. Our commitment to the parents was twofold: number one, that we would do whatever we could to get the two sides back to the table, and this morning I have written both the school board and the ATA local, encouraging them to get back to the bargaining table immediately and put the interests of students' education as the highest priority. Secondly, we did make sure that the parents knew that Alberta Education was providing online services for students, and to that end we are funding a session on Sunday night for any parents. We will have officials of our department in Spruce Grove to ensure that students know how to access online learning.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a trustee, Mr. Minister, of the Parkland school board has recently resigned due to a lack of faith in the board's position, does the minister have confidence that the board is capable of objectively resolving this strike in the situation that's there presently?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, the school board, like all school boards in Alberta, is duly elected by the citizens of that county, and until I have evidence of any wrongdoing, I would expect that both the school board and the Teachers' Association would jointly approach these negotiations in the best interest of the students.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What planning has the minister done to ensure that students, especially those with upcoming diploma exams, will be able to make up for lost class time once school resumes? In other words, what's happening with those students that are missing out on their education, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Liepert: Well, as I say, we are making options available online for students and have the session planned for Sunday evening. We will continue to monitor. Hopefully both sides, as I say, will put students' education first and foremost and will come to a resolution of this matter.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mountain Pine Beetle

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There has been a lot of recent media attention on Alberta's mountain pine beetle infestation. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. How serious is the threat facing Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How serious? Very, very serious. It's the most serious threat our forestry industry has ever faced. It's no exaggeration to say that, basically, we're at war with the pine beetle, and unfortunately the front line of this war has moved from British Columbia to Alberta.

The B.C. pine forests are a disaster. The forestry, the industry, and the revenues of that government are in shambles. They've lost 9 million hectares of wood in British Columbia. That's the equivalent of 82 million cubic metres of wood, which would build 11 million new homes in this province. One year ago we estimated

only 20,000 to 30,000 pine beetles in Alberta. Six months ago that was estimated up to 200,000 to 300,000. Today it's estimated at 2 million to 3 million. There was an infestation that came over last fall in a wind. The situation is very serious.

Mr. Speaker, doing nothing is not an option, and I can assure you that this government will take strong and decisive action to stop the spread of the pine beetle.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What action is Alberta taking to combat the mountain pine beetle?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past fall and winter we've been doing extensive surveys to monitor where the pine beetles are and in what numbers. We basically have a two-level approach. Level 1 is that we identify single trees. We identify them and remove them, and we've had over 500 people in the field this winter doing that type of level 1 approach. We have a level 2 approach. When we discover stands of trees that are either infested or threatened by pine beetle, we remove those as well. In these areas we've asked industry to revise their forestry management plans to resequence their cutting sequence to take these susceptible pine stands. We've also provided grants to various municipalities to deal with the removal of pine beetle infested trees on private lands in these communities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Given the seriousness of this threat, who is the minister using as an expert to determine the appropriate response to the mountain pine beetle?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. We're receiving ongoing advice from the leading pine beetle experts across the country and also our counterparts in British Columbia. Last spring we had a summit on the pine beetle issue convened in Calgary with experts from around the country. We continue to work with the Canadian Forest Service, Parks Canada, and with Alberta parks and recreation. We also have a pine beetle committee made up of reeves and councillors from across the province.

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that doing nothing is not an option for this government, and we'll take all steps that are necessary and appropriate to win this war.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Women's Issues

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is International Women's Day, a day to celebrate the achievements and potential of women around the world. However, here in Alberta the representa-

tion of women in cabinet does not inspire confidence that women are truly at the table in this government. My questions are to the Premier. Can the Premier tell us why he has chosen to disregard gender balance in establishing his new cabinet?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, selecting a cabinet, of course, probably is the most difficult responsibility of any Premier or, quite frankly, a Prime Minister. But I just want to make one thing very clear to those that raise this issue in the House in terms of this Premier not having respect for the women of the province of Alberta. I know very well the contribution of the pioneers of this province, the pioneering women that are really the true heroes of the province of Alberta, with about four or five children in tow when their husband is working hundreds of miles away, whether on the railway or building a road someplace under very difficult conditions, not knowing if their husband is going to be back at the end of that work term, at the conclusion, given the unsafe conditions. There was not any kind of phone that you could pick up or fax or e-mail, certainly. Working in isolation, trying to make ends meet in the pioneering spirit: I know what the value of women is to this province. I don't have to be told in this particular House.

Mrs. Mather: I appreciate the recognition of the value of women in our society, but given that there are only two female voices in cabinet, what plan of action has the Premier developed to ensure that the interests, issues, and concerns of women will be addressed by this government?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of all of the women in our caucus. In fact, we do have many women in our caucus, but one of my personal goals – and I mentioned this very publicly a number of times – is to recruit new candidates to the Progressive Conservative caucus so that they can run for office and encourage them. We've taken a bold step here in this Legislature – and, again, co-operation on both sides of the House – to change the sitting schedule so that life here as an elected member gives some form of family life as well. That's going to bring a number of people interested in running for not only our party but also across the way. That's one of my personal goals, and I'll continue to work in that area.

Mrs. Mather: Given that in the past there was an entire secretariat and advisory council devoted to women, can the Premier explain why the government now has only one staff member working directly on women's issues?

Mr. Stelmach: Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, mention was made earlier in the response to the ministerial statement. I don't know where this one staff member is. I'm sorry. I'm being very honest. We'll find out where.

This is more than just having staff in the government. It's working here with all Albertans to try to improve the desire of people of both genders and from all ethnic backgrounds to run for public office. I'm actually quite honoured and I'm humbled by the fact that some pay particular attention to the fact that I'm of Ukrainian ancestry, but, you know, people have to work hard at getting here. We're going to work with every Albertan to give them an equal opportunity. We have a lot of road to gain, obviously. I made that commitment, and I'm going to stick to my word.

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

2:50 Hospital Construction in South Calgary

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent weeks there have been many questions regarding hospital beds in Calgary, in particular regarding the construction of the south Calgary hospital. This has been very unsettling to my constituents as well as to many of the people that live in Calgary. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister tell us if this much-needed hospital in the south of Calgary is going to be built?

Mr. Hancock: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, this government made a commitment to the south Calgary hospital a number of years ago. A significant amount of money has been set aside in the budget and pledged for that hospital, and we expect that that hospital will be built. The plans are under way. The discussions with the Calgary health authority, in whose jurisdiction it falls, are under way. I understand that we will be getting into some discussions very quickly about the scope and the nature of the project. Yes, it's an important project, and I expect that it will proceed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. As you indicated, the Calgary health region is in plans, and they've indicated that they hope to begin that this year, to complete in the year 2010-2011. Does this minister have any reason to believe that they'll not be able to proceed as planned?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, these projects are large projects, and they have stages that they go through. I understand that the intention by the Calgary health authority is to break ground this year to service the property. In the meantime we're looking at the scope of the project and the needs of the project all in the normal course of building a large project of this nature. So far as I understand, the project is on track in terms of where it is and what we need to know about it.

The reason why it's hit the table now as a concern, I believe, in Calgary is the speculation and the suggestion of cost increases with respect to that project. Well, in a project of this size, Mr. Speaker, when you first conceptualize the project, there's an estimate of costs. There's an estimate of costs at the start. Construction costs, as is well known in this province, have gone up over time, but also as you . . .

Mr. Chase: That's because you've delayed construction.

Mr. Hancock: Nobody has delayed construction on the project. Projects of this nature and size have to be planned carefully and implemented carefully.

Mrs. Ady: This is good news. Thank you.

My final supplemental actually goes to the Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. Although I'm aware that the Minister of Health and Wellness is doing a lot of work about health care workforce, does this minister have any assistance to ensure that when this hospital opens, we'll have doctors, nurses, and technicians to staff it?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we have a 10-year strategy, along with the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, on building and educating tomorrow's workforce, a very careful plan with substrategies to help us educate and grow our own in Alberta. We are working collaboratively, the minister of health and myself, with

the minister of advanced education on marketing tools that we can get involved with, the use of e-technology, conferencing, an aboriginal workforce strategy. I'm confident that by the time we open the doors for the south Calgary hospital, there will be a robust workforce in place. The activities to date suggest to me that we've laid the groundwork for replacing those that are needed and working with the minister of health on the scope of practice issues which will help to build the capacity in the Calgary health region.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. During the 1990s the government made the worst health policy decision of the decade by closing three hospitals and eliminating 1,500 beds in Calgary. Now the construction of the desperately needed hospital in south Calgary is being held up by skyrocketing construction costs, which are a direct consequence of this government's failure to properly plan for the economic boom. My questions are to the Premier. Is the Premier comfortable sitting back watching the Calgary health region scramble to find money and possibly go into debt to construct this hospital?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the Calgary regional health authority is not scrambling, not delaying anything. These are significant cost increases. We need information to process through the various departments to see how we can reduce some of the just huge inflationary cost pressures. It's not only in this particular hospital, but it's in schools and roads that are being built. We see inflation anywhere from 20 to 40 per cent. Maybe there are ways of bringing some of that inflation down. But as we heard today, the hospital is part of our capital plan and will continue to be, and we're going to get there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: how does the Premier justify a \$7 billion surplus while the health region is considering going into debt to fund this hospital?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to justify a \$7 billion surplus. It just happens that oil and natural gas were at the prices they were in terms of the world market, so we've been very fortunate. We just hope that these prices continue for some time, but we can't depend on the level of natural resources, especially those prices, well into the future. That's why we're very pragmatic and thoughtful in the way we're doing our budget to make sure that three, four years down the road we're not in a deficit position. I made that promise to all Albertans, that this province will never ever again be in an operational deficit, period.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will the Premier join with the Alberta Liberals and finally stand up for Calgarians by recommending that they fully fund the new hospital in south Calgary? Do the right thing.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I don't have to stand up with the Alberta Liberals. Alberta Liberals aren't funding the hospital. The money for the hospital and all other infrastructure comes from the taxpayers of the province of Alberta.

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

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are fed up with the lack of action by this government to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Now federal money is available to reduce emissions, and this government reverts to its old habits with their plan to give the money away to big oil to build more pipelines and to drill more wells. The public demands absolute reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and not this shell game of pipelines and enhanced oil recovery and intensity targets. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. After getting sweet deals on royalty rates and corporate tax breaks for so long, doesn't this government think it's about time that the big energy corporations started to pay their own way, especially for all the carbon dioxide and noxious emissions that they pump into the atmosphere?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess the short answer I might give to the member is that I advise him to stay tuned as I have legislation that I will be tabling immediately following question period that I think will go a long way towards answering his question.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, intensity targets are not absolute reduction targets.

Considering the huge profits that energy corporations are enjoying, why can't they build their own CO₂ pipelines and instead use public money to invest in conservation and in renewables?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate on the issue with regard to hard caps versus intensity, and I'm sure we'll have ample opportunity during debate on the bill.

But with respect to the specific question, I'm not aware of any decisions that have been made on how the federal dollars are going to be allocated one way or the other. There has been speculation in the media, and it would appear that the NDP have already decided that the decision has been made.

Mr. Eggen: Well, I would ask then, please, as well: when will the government stop subsidizing half measures like this proposed CO₂ pipeline, which is, in fact, mostly designed to pump more oil out of the ground and therefore will actually release more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere?

Mr. Renner: Again, Mr. Speaker, I actually look forward to the debate on the bill because obviously it's going to be interesting.

On the issue of carbon sequestration, I encourage the member again to look very carefully at the plan that the government has. I will do my very, very best over the coming weeks to explain to him how our plan will eventually lead to the ability for us to maintain an economy in Alberta and at the same time ensure that we have an environment that is around for our children, our grandchildren, and their children.

3:00

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

Petro-Canada Refinery Fire

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, just recently there was a very serious fire out at Petro-Canada's refinery in Strathcona county just outside of Edmonton, raising concerns about the price of gasoline and public safety. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Can the minister advise the members of the Assembly of the expected impact of the fire on the supply of gasoline in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, there has been a minor fire reported in the Petro-Canada refinery, as the member has noted, but thankfully it was contained very quickly, and there are no reported injuries. Petro-Canada reports that the incident would reduce their capacity by about 15 per cent in the short term. The good news is that it's not expected to affect the supply of gasoline in this region.

It's also important to note that there are two other refineries producing gasoline in the area, and together these facilities have a capacity of close to 400,000 barrels a day. So put in this perspective, Mr. Speaker, it's a small impact to one of the three refineries and should not have any long-term effect on our supply.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, again to the same minister. Given his answer, I know that I'll go home this weekend to Whitecourt-St. Anne and they'll say: what's happening to the prices at the pumps? I think we all have noticed recently what's happened. They're going up. Has this fire caused that price increase?

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this fire has very, very little to do with the current price of gasoline at the pumps in Whitecourt or any other region in the province of Alberta. The price of gasoline is determined by the market, determined by supply and demand. The good news is, as I said earlier, that the fire is not expected to have a major impact on our supply. Other factors affecting prices would include the price of crude oil, refining costs, retailing, marketing costs, transportation, and distribution. I'm pleased to say that the gasoline prices in Alberta continue to be the lowest on average in the country, and Albertans still pay the lowest provincial tax at 9 cents a litre on gasoline we consume.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents will be much more satisfied after that answer, I'm sure.

To the Minister of Environment: can the minister tell this House what were the environmental impacts of that fire?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Energy indicated, this was a small, isolated incident, so we're confident that there are no environmental impacts as a result of this fire. As a matter of fact, measurements were taken, and they show no measurable impact with respect to air quality.

We've asked, consistent with environment legislation, that Petro-Canada provide us with an explanation of what happened and, in addition to that, with any measures that they will be putting in place to prevent it from happening again.

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

Nonrenewable Resource Revenues

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is addicted to nonrenewable resource revenues for annual spending. However, the government's own projections show that these revenues are declining. Yesterday's throne speech made absolutely no mention of a savings plan for nonrenewable resource revenue.

I'm honoured to ask the first question of the new President of the Treasury Board, and out of respect for him, I'm going to make it easy. A one-word answer, a true-or-false question. Mr. Minister, is it true or is it false that this government relies more on resource revenues today for annual spending than it did ten years ago? True or false?

Mr. Snelgrove: To make it really simple for the hon. member, I'll let the Minister of Finance answer.

Dr. Oberg: I, too, shall make it very simple for the hon. member. The answer is: true.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you for the truth.

Mr. Speaker, my second question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Given that a few months ago this minister advocated for a 30 per cent resource revenue savings plan and has recently been silent on the issue, I'm wondering: has the minister lost his voice?

The Speaker: Questions in the question period deal with government policies. It strikes the chair that that question had to do with a personal opinion. Now, if the hon. minister wishes to deal with it, fine, but I think we should have to move on to your third question, sir.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, it would appear as if he has, in fact, lost his voice.

Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Rules

The Speaker: No, that's not a nice thing to say. The chair made it very clear that questions in question period deal with government policy. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was asking a question for personal opinion. The chair interceded as the chair is supposed to do. The chair in a gentle way cautioned the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford got up and made a smarty-pants comment, which caused the chair to stand up again. So would the hon. member move to his third question, please.

Nonrenewable Resource Revenues (continued)

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't wait until Tuesday.

To the Minister of Finance: a multiple choice question. How does this government expect to fund Alberta's future as resource revenues decline: (a) tax increases, (b) program cuts, (c) go back into debt, or (d) all of the above?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, again, very simply the obvious answer is: (e) none of the above. The hon. member should know that there's been legislation passed in this Assembly that limits the amount of oil and gas revenue to be utilized in our budget at \$5.3 billion. The rest of the questions that will be there are obviously questions that will be dealt with in the budget, and I would ask the hon. member to stay tuned for the budget on April 19, 2007.

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

Foreign Workers

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few months my constituency office has received numerous complaints of tragic cases where foreign workers have been under false pretenses and false promises imported to Alberta by so-called agents. Upon their arrival to Alberta these workers are paid less than what was initially promised, are charged exorbitant fees for the privilege of being employed, are accommodated in substandard dwellings, and often are threatened with deportation. To the Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry: what is Alberta doing to protect these workers from unscrupulous employers and labour brokers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a very timely question, a very good question because we have been working very hard on both our temporary foreign worker program as well as our provincial nominee program. Brokers are not entitled to charge both ways, which is, in fact, what has happened in some very unscrupulous situations. When a contractor or an employer decides that they want to have foreign workers come over, they engage frequently some international broker for that privilege. They fund that broker, and they bring those foreign workers to Alberta. Hopefully, they fulfill the obligations in the contract. It is then incumbent upon that employer to make sure that they have the proper housing, the appropriate shelter, and the amenities.

In our department we offer foreign workers the same protection that other employees have working in this province, not only in occupational health and safety but by making sure that deductions are properly taken from their cheques, that employment standard complaints are followed up on in the same fashion. We hold workshops for employers, so they know what our expectations are. We, in fact, school the brokers that might want to do business in Alberta about what our laws and our expectations are. In short, Mr. Speaker, we do our level best to make sure that we try to avoid these types of conflicts.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: is the minister working with the federal government to address this issue?

Ms Evans: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, as we speak, we have officials in Ottawa talking to them about all aspects of the immigration program. It is of urgent need that we get on with finding the right ways of selecting the appropriate employees for the province of Alberta. I might add that in speaking with the immigrant women that I had the privilege of meeting with today at lunchtime, it's important, too, that we work with the federal government to make sure, if people immigrate from another province, that in the transfer of their lives when they move to Alberta, we have resources to engage them appropriately in our community. The federal government seems sympathetic to this issue, and I'm assured that we will be well on our way to having a made-in-Alberta immigration solution.

3:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Minister of Service Alberta. Can the minister tell us what regulations are in place and, more importantly, being enforced to stop this new industry of foreign worker exploitation?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter if you are looking for jobs for Albertans or for Canadians or others coming into Alberta. If you are doing that job, you have to be licensed by the province of Alberta, and you must be bonded. All directors, partners, and officers of such agencies must undergo a criminal record check, and they are also governed under the Fair Trading Act. Any breaches of this act could be subject to fines up to \$100,000. So the government is very aware of this growing industry, and we're keeping an eye on it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, shortly I'll call upon the first of six to participate today, but just to note there were 84 questions and answers today which is very, very effective. If that kind of productivity stays through to July 15, we'll just really ask all the questions there are, and all the answers will be given.

head:

Members' Statements

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

Great Kids Awards

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to rise today and recognize Alberta's great kids. On Sunday the hon. Premier and the Minister of Children's Services presented awards to 16 outstanding children and youth for their extraordinary achievements at home, at school, and in their communities. These great kids were selected from nearly 200 nominations province-wide. I had the honour of attending the eighth annual Great Kids awards ceremony and saw first-hand the great things that Alberta's children and youth are doing in all corners of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of Alberta's 2007 great kids. They are: Kyla Meinczinger from Stony Plain, Kendra Nilsson from Lethbridge, Samantha Semrock from Edmonton, Albert Goulet from Calgary, Alicia Baharally from Stettler, Alex Brown from Calgary, Natasha Maloney from Fort McMurray, Braden Morrison from Claresholm, Jeremy Mathews from Fort McMurray, Marie Kennedy from Edmonton, Josie Anton Roberts from St. Paul, Rique Dempsey from Stettler, Kayla Lynn Mossewah from Rocky Mountain House, Chris Mani from Edmonton, Keely Evans from Thorhild, and Fardoussa Omar from Edmonton.

As I heard the hon. Premier say, these great kids all have a promising future, and thanks to them, so does Alberta. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor.

Provincial Men's Curling Championship

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to recognize the community of Drayton Valley and Brazeau county for hosting this year's provincial men's curling championships. I am so glad to take this opportunity to recognize both the accomplishments of tournament winners, Kevin Martin and his team, and the beautifully executed event put on by a shining light of rural Alberta.

Being involved in a variety of sports, I have a great appreciation for the time that goes into the success of an event such as the provincial men's curling championships. The time and effort that went into preparing for the Drayton Valley curling tournament, from

the event co-chairs to the volunteers and, of course, the fans, are what made it such a tremendous success. The 12 teams that competed for Alberta's Kia Cup included the Ferbey Four and many other well-known Alberta teams.

Mr. Speaker, curling has become tremendously popular in Canada, particularly in the prairies, which are home to 31 per cent of curlers in the country. One of these curlers participating in this year's tournament and leading his team to victory was, as previously mentioned, Kevin Martin. Kevin is an Alberta boy and is hailed as one of the most successful curlers in the world. He got his start in the Canadian junior championships in 1985. He made an appearance at the Winter Olympics in 1992 and again in 2002, and today he is competing in the 2007 Brier in Hamilton, Ontario. This history is what led to the use of the expression in the world of curling known as "to do a Martin," acknowledging Kevin's amazing ability to pull off what appear to be impossible shots in difficult circumstances. We wish him and Team Alberta well.

Mr. Speaker, the people and the community of Drayton Valley and area have greatly contributed to the continued growth of curling in our province. I appreciate the time I've been given to recognize their efforts and contributions, and I ask my colleagues to take a moment to applaud their efforts as well.

Thank you.

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

Hospital Construction in South Calgary

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It feels good to be back among my friends and colleagues and even the members opposite. Four weeks ago I had surgery to have my gall bladder out in Calgary and lived to talk about it thanks to the excellent doctors, nurses, staff, and management who work in the Rockyview hospital and in and for the Calgary health region, no thanks to the Conservative government of Alberta. For reasons I won't go into because my medical history is my business, so I'll just park that part of my story behind FOIP, I needed to have my gall bladder removed old school: open abdominal surgery instead of laparoscopically.

Now, doing it old school, Mr. Speaker, meant a two-day stay in the Rockyview hospital, 34 hours of which I spent in recovery on the day surgery ward on a gurney because there were no beds available in the hospital. By the time I was able to get out of my gurney to go for my first walk the afternoon of the surgery, the staff were getting patients changed into their gowns, handing them back their clothing in plastic bags, and telling them to go take a seat in the waiting room for perhaps several hours because things were backed up in the OR again and day surgery was out of beds. The Rockyview was under an almost continuous code burgundy. Well, actually, now they call it status burgundy because the word "code" implies something urgent or acute, and "status," well, is a word that reflects the chronic condition that is the hospital bed shortage in Alberta's biggest city.

Over a million people, Mr. Speaker, live and from time to time get sick or hurt in a city with the acute care capacity for a population of not much more than half a million. There's a big empty field off the Deerfoot in Calgary's deep south that's supposed to have a new hospital under construction on it, and nothing is happening because the Conservatives, with their \$7 billion surplus, won't just cut the Calgary health region a cheque to cover today's cost of building the hospital that Calgary needed yesterday. In fact, we needed it three years ago.

Mr. Speaker, Nero fiddled while Rome burned. I don't know what instrument the Calgary Conservative caucus plays, but it's time to put it down and get to work.

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

International Women's Day

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the 30th anniversary of International Women's Day. This significant day reminds us of the progress we have made to advance women's rights and of the challenges that remain. This year's theme, Ending Violence against Women: Action for Real Results, reflects the urgent need to address violence against women. The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters' fiscal year statistics ending March 2006 note that nearly 13,000 women and children were accommodated in shelters in one year. Sadly, another 13,000 were turned away because they were full. International Women's Day is a time to reflect on our collective responsibility to women and children experiencing violence, and not providing shelter for half of the women in need is truly unacceptable.

Violence against women is also the issue of poverty. The Canadian Panel on Violence against Women drew the connection between poverty and violence when they said, "Working to end poverty is integral to ending systemic inequality and violence against all women." Violence against women knows no boundaries of income, race, or geography. For women experiencing violence, poverty limits their choices and their options.

There are a number of women's organizations working hard to offer hope to women and children experiencing this terrible violence. The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, the YWCA, and many other women's centres and shelters provide assistance, and I thank them for that. Their work is essential and inspirational.

I would like to congratulate Sylvia Oishi, Laraine Stuart, Jean Greer McCarthy, Pat McMillan, and Sandra Nelson on being the 2007 YWCA Lethbridge women of distinction, and I thank them for their many volunteer hours.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

3:20

Lifesaving Society

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the Lifesaving Society and the admirable service that this organization provides to Albertans. The Lifesaving Society is a charitable organization that works to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs like Water Smart, public education, and safety management services. Each year in Canada the society certifies more than 500,000 people in its swim, lifesaving, lifeguarding, and leadership courses.

I wanted to also acknowledge what a privilege it was for me to attend the Lifesaving Society rescue awards and the Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth awards earlier today. The awards recognize approximately 130 Albertans who have demonstrated personal acts of bravery or dedicated significant years of service. These individuals exemplify personal courage, and I am humbled that there are so many Albertans who were honoured in the award ceremony. I have the highest appreciation for the important and courageous work done by all the individuals involved with this organization. They provide important services that are engaged in protecting and furthering the health and safety of Albertans. I commend their steadfast leadership in educating people on water safety, lifesaving, and lifeguarding.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all my colleagues I want to acknowledge the commendable initiatives of the Lifesaving Society, and I wish them continued success in providing their valuable services.

Thank you.

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

Growth Pressures in Fort McMurray

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak about the urgent need for planned, orderly growth in our province, particularly in the tar sands. The current gold rush style of growth is leaving many Albertans behind. Families are feeling the squeeze. There aren't enough schools. Wait times in hospitals and emergency rooms are increasing. Families are facing high tuition fees for their kids and a shortage of affordable, high-quality long-term care for their parents. Working families face increasing housing costs, homelessness in their communities is increasing, and there is serious environmental damage.

Despite the rhetoric in yesterday's Speech from the Throne it's clear that when it comes to planning, this government just doesn't get it. As it stands, the energy policy of the government of Alberta is designed to meet American interests. What we need is a made-in-Alberta energy policy designed to meet the needs of Albertans and Canadians. A secret meeting in Houston last year in which Alberta's Minister of Energy participated has called for a fivefold increase in tar sands production within a very short time, something which would completely derail Alberta's economy. The result is that Alberta's quality of life is being sold down the pipeline for the sake of record-breaking oil company profits.

Several new projects have recently been announced for the export of raw bitumen to the United States. A proposal has been made to build an entire plant in Asia and ship it to Alberta, and worst of all, qualified Alberta building trades workers are left sitting by the phone while employers bring in thousands of temporary foreign workers.

Alberta needs a made-in-Alberta energy policy. We need a short-term moratorium on approval of new projects in order to develop a clear plan for Alberta's economic future. We must stop the rush to build pipelines to send raw bitumen to the United States for processing.

Finally, we must establish a new, more reasonable royalty regime, including a 50 per cent royalty on exported raw bitumen. These royalties will ensure that we can lay the foundation for sustained prosperity that includes all Albertans. Alberta needs a made-in-Alberta energy policy which is in the interests of Albertans.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, petitions?

Mr. Backs: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with some sadness that I present these petitions because these are petitions that deal with the need for action for Josh Hunt. These are the first of about 45,000 names put together.

The Speaker: Hon. member, please just have a chair. Does the hon. member want to do this under petitions or tablings?

Mr. Backs: Both.

The Speaker: Is the petition in order?

Mr. Backs: I think this one is.

The Speaker: You think? We're having a debate. There's a way that the chair knows because he gets a lot of stares from the table officers, who at this point are shaking their heads.

Mr. Backs: Okay. We'll table those.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give oral notice of a motion to be dealt with possibly Monday night. I beg the indulgence of the House because it's a fairly long motion dealing with temporary amendments to be made to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly once I table the House leaders' agreement. The notice of motion would be as follows:

Be it resolved that the following temporary amendments be made to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in order to give effect to the March 7, 2007, House Leaders' Agreement.

1 Standing Order 3(1) is amended by striking out "1:30 p.m." and substituting "1 p.m."

2 The following is added after Standing Order 3:
2007 sitting schedule

3.1(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the Assembly shall stand adjourned every 4th week during the 2007 Spring Sitting.

(2) Unless otherwise ordered and subject to suborder (3), the Assembly shall meet for the 2007 Fall Sitting from the first Monday in November to the first Thursday in December, inclusive.

(3) The 2007 Fall Sitting may be varied by House Leaders' agreement, which shall be provided to the Clerk who shall immediately publish a revised calendar.

(4) Nothing in this Standing Order precludes the Government from advising the Speaker that the public interest requires the Assembly to meet on a certain date, and the Speaker shall give notice that the Assembly shall meet at that time to transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time.

3 Standing Order 4 is struck out and the following is substituted:
4(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the sitting hours of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Monday: 1 p.m. to conclusion of Motions other than Government Motions

Tuesday: 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Wednesday: 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Thursday: 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

(2) Notwithstanding suborder (1), upon the passage of a Government motion before 6 p.m. which may be made on one day's notice and is subject to debate, the Assembly may meet on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

(3) If there is no evening sitting, at 6 p.m. or on Monday at the conclusion of Motions other than Government Motions, the Speaker adjourns the Assembly to the next sitting day.

(4) On Monday, if there is an evening sitting, at the conclusion of Motions other than Government Motions, the Speaker leaves the chair until 7 p.m.

(5) On Tuesday and Wednesday, if there is an evening sitting and at 6 p.m. the business of the Assembly or Committee of the Whole has not concluded, the Speaker or Chair, as the case may be, leaves the chair until 7 p.m.

(6) On evenings when the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole and the business of the committee is not concluded, at 10 p.m. the Committee shall rise and report immediately.

4 Standing Order 7 is amended

(a) in suborder (1) by adding "at 1:30 p.m.," before "Oral Question Period";

- (b) by adding the following after suborder (1):
 (1.1) At 1:30 p.m., the Assembly shall proceed to Oral Question Period with the balance of the daily routine to follow.

5 Standing Order 8 is amended

- (a) by striking out suborders (1) to (3) and substituting the following:
 8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Written Questions
 Motions for Returns
 Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders
 At 4:55 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions.

- (2) Subject to suborder (3), on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Government Motions
 Government Bills and Orders
 Private Bills.

- (3) If the business enumerated in suborder (1) has not received a total of 3 hours of consideration, then Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders shall be the first order of business for the Assembly on Thursday afternoon for such time until the total time for consideration for those items enumerated in suborder (1) reaches 3 hours for that week.

- (b) in suborder (6) by striking out "evening" and substituting "afternoon".

6 Standing Order 34 is amended by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:

- (3) On the Wednesday preceding the consideration of written questions and motions for returns, the Government House Leader shall indicate to the Assembly which ones the Government will be accepting, accepting with amendments and rejecting.

- (3.1) The Clerk shall read the number, text and name of the sponsor of any written question or motion for return that has been accepted by the Government when this item of business is called.

7 Standing Order 53 is struck out and the following is substituted:

53 Public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee as they become available.

8 Standing Order 56 is amended by adding the following after suborder (2):

- (2.1) A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or special committee may be made upon written notification signed by the original member and filed with the Clerk and Committee Chair, provided such notice is given not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

- (2.2) A substituted member under the suborder (2.1) shall be considered for all purposes to be acting in the place of the original member.

- (2.3) A temporary substitution in the membership shall be permitted for a specific time period or for committee consideration of a specific issue.

- (2.4) A temporary substitution may be terminated at any time by the original member of the committee.

9 These amendments shall have effect from Tuesday, March 13, 2007, until the conclusion of the 2007 Fall Sitting.

10 As soon as possible after approval of this motion, the Clerk shall publish a calendar which shows the days on which the Assembly shall meet in 2007.

And be it further resolved that the Assembly shall give further consideration on a timely basis to the necessary temporary Standing Orders that will be required to give effect to the balance of the House Leaders' Agreement.

3:30

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, the last draft that the chair was provided with was dated at 12:19 p.m. today. The motion that the hon. Government House Leader has read into the record varies from this one, so for all intents and purposes I would ask that the House leader provide a copy of the motion the House leader just read into the record to all members. *Hansard* will not be published before members return on Monday. I think it would be unfair for members to have to wait until Monday to see this written text. They should have it this afternoon in the House. Would you kindly stamp on that 3:30 p.m. and ensure that all other previous drafts are shredded so that when we arrive here to have a debate on this motion, everybody will be talking from the same proposed rule paper, please.

Now, would you proceed, sir, with the next item.

Mr. Hancock: I'd be pleased to do that, and just for the reference of members I would indicate that the pieces that I did not read in related to the House sitting in the evenings. The motion as it was worded that I was provided with provided for specific sitting times, which were not part of the House leaders' agreement. That can be brought back in when we deal with sections 5 and 6 of the House leaders' agreement and dealt with at that time. That's the difference between them as I read it, but I will make sure that the appropriate version is on the tables of every member.

The Speaker: This afternoon, please.

Mr. Hancock: This afternoon.

The Speaker: Now, are we going to deal with the Government House Leader on the next item? Do you want to give notice about written questions and motions for returns?

Mr. Hancock: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. I would move that written questions and motions for returns stand and retain their places.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Bill 3 Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2007

Mr. Renner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 3, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this groundbreaking legislation establishes Canada's first legislated greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for large industrial emitters. Bill 3 and the accompanying regulations require industry to reduce emissions intensity by 12 per cent by 2008 either through upgrading facilities, purchasing Alberta offsets, or investing in a technology fund to develop Alberta-based technology to reduce emissions.

Mr. Speaker, because this is primarily enabling legislation, I will also be tabling draft copies of the proposed specified gas emitters regulation at the appropriate time so that the details of our approach are more open for debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Bill 4
Child Care Licensing Act

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 4, the Child Care Licensing Act.

This bill is designed to give government the framework needed to create better access to innovative, quality child care programs while ensuring that enforcement mechanisms are in place to protect children and keep them safe.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

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

Bill 5
Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise to introduce at first reading Bill 5, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2007.

Minor amendments to health legislation will make it easier for the government to review and verify health care claims and will ease administrative procedures for Albertans who wish to opt out of the health insurance plan. Other housekeeping amendments will ensure that the act is more inclusive and will legislate the rolling adoption of guidelines and schedules.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 5 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed on behalf of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Bill 6
Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2007

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce and move Bill 6, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2007.

These amendments clarify processes to align legislation with current practices, including the approval processes of degree programs for public and private institutions. Other amendments enhance flexibility for public postsecondary institutions, including the opportunity for board members appointed to a college or technical institute board as chair in their second term to serve an additional term.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 6 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 7
Private Vocational Schools Amendment Act, 2007

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce and move Bill 7, the Private Vocational Schools Amendment Act, 2007.

This bill deals with amendments to the Private Vocational Schools Act, which is the legislation governing the licensing of vocational training offered by private institutions in Alberta. Changes to the Private Vocational Schools Act that are included in this bill are designed to enhance consumer protection and update the act so that it is more reflective of the current environment surrounding the licensing of vocational training.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 7 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Bill 8
Vital Statistics Act

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Vital Statistics Act.

This proposed bill consolidates the Vital Statistics Act and the Change of Name Act. It will modernize the legislation to reflect cultural changes as the legislation has not been substantially amended since 1950. It makes provisions consistent with federal and other provincial acts and improves clarity and efficiency of the legislation and, as well, updates languages and processes.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 8 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

3:40

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would ask the House for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1)(d) in order to introduce bills 201 and 202.

The Speaker: Normally the chair would not intervene with respect to one side or the other side of a request, but this is a good request that allows business to get done on Monday. Anybody opposed?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Bill 201
Funding Alberta's Future Act

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 201, the flagship bill of the Alberta Liberal caucus, entitled Funding Alberta's Future Act.

The purpose of Bill 201 is to do for Alberta what every financial planner tells their clients to do: pay yourself first. This act will require the establishment of a clear, legislated plan for investing 30 per cent of Alberta's resource revenue in the heritage fund as well as other funds for critical infrastructure investments, postsecondary education, the arts, and future opportunities identified by Albertans. Over time the renewable revenue from these investments will replace the boom-and-bust budgeting of recent years and put Alberta's finances on a truly sustainable foundation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

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

Bill 202
Consumer Advocate Act

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce and move first reading of my first-ever private member's bill, Bill 202, the Consumer Advocate Act.

The purpose of Bill 202 is to establish an independent officer of the Legislature, a market watchdog whose mandate will be to present and protect the rights and interests of Alberta consumers. Consumers need a voice. They need someone to advocate on their behalf, and they need someone who has the power to investigate and make recommendations to address unfair market practices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table with the House the requisite number of copies of a document entitled All Party* Agreement. There's an asterisk beside Party to indicate that party is defined as per the Legislative Assembly Act to be recognized parties, just so it's clear that it doesn't leave anybody out by that definition, but using that to describe the document that was acknowledged by the Government House Leader, the Official Opposition House Leader, and the House leader of the third party with respect to democratic reform initiatives relative to the procedures of the House.

We hope to bring forward, as I mentioned in Notices of Motions, discussion with respect to time frames as set out in the House leaders' agreement, which will make the House more friendly to participation by members and people who aspire to be members. Other parts of the agreement deal with how we might establish policy field committees, how we might deal with Committee of Supply, and other matters. That agreement will be the subject of various motions before the House in due course.

The Speaker: To the page that's going to take the document to have it filed with the Clerk, I want you to make a copy for all Members of the Legislative Assembly and have it placed on their desk forthwith. Just to file them in the library – not all the members have

access if they're going away for the weekend. If this thing comes back, because this will deal with changes in the House, all hon. members must be up to date, front and centre, having studied the document so that there'll be no privilege questions raised on Monday, please.

Government House Leader, I'm sorry. You were going to proceed with another one?

Mr. Hancock: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Environment I'm pleased to table draft copies of a proposed specified gas emitters regulation, which was earlier referred to by the minister. These would be regulations which he would propose to be promulgated after the adoption of Bill 3, and he wanted them to be available to the House as they look at the bill.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to rise with the requisite number of copies to table a petition, the first 250 names of about 45,000 to come, put together by Gary Hunt on public safety matters.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today being International Women's Day and the theme this year being Ending Impunity for Violence against Women and Girls, I rise to table a document which is a compilation of figures from the United Nations study on violence against women. One of the key findings of this study is that violence against women is the most common but least punished crime in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table the requisite number of copies of a web page posted by the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. It was a web page during his campaign for the leadership of the PC Party in which he espouses the idea of saving 30 per cent of nonrenewable resource revenues.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Hon. members, I have a number of tablings that I have to do today as well. Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act I'm tabling with the Assembly five copies of the following Members' Services orders: number one, the Members' Services Committee Order No. 1/06, members' allowances amendment order (No. 13), which came into force on January 1, 2007; number two, Members' Services Committee Order No. 2/06, constituency services amendment order (No. 17), which will come into force on April 1, 2007; and number three, Members' Services Committee Order No. 3/06, constituency services amendment order (No. 18), which came into force on December 14, 2006. I did previously provide to all members a copy of these orders.

Pursuant to section 46(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act, chapter C-23, the *Revised Statutes of Alberta*, I'm tabling with the Assembly the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner. This report covers the period April 1, 2005, to March 31, 2006.

I'm tabling with the Assembly as well the report of the Ethics Commissioner into allegations involving the hon. Member for

Calgary-Montrose, Hung Pham, dated January 23, 2007. I distributed this report to members on January 23, 2007.

I'm also tabling with the Assembly today the report of the Ethics Commissioner into allegations involving the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, Harvey Cenaiko, dated January 30, 2007. I distributed this report to hon. members as well on January 30, 2007.

I'm tabling with the Assembly the 39th annual report of the office of the Ombudsman for the period April 1, 2005, to March 31, 2006. I distributed a copy of this report to members as well on October 24, 2006.

head:

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Government Accountability Act on behalf of the ministers responsible: aboriginal affairs and northern development 2005-2006 annual report; Alberta advanced education annual report 2005-2006; Alberta agriculture, food and rural development annual report 2005-2006; Alberta Children's Services annual report 2005-2006; Alberta community development annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2006; Alberta economic development 2005-06 annual report; Alberta Education annual report 2005-06; Alberta Ministry of Energy 2005-06 annual report; Ministry of Environment 2005-06 annual report; Executive Council annual report 2005-06; Alberta Finance annual report 2005-06; Alberta gaming 2005-06 annual report; Alberta government services 2005-06 annual report; Alberta Ministry of Health and Wellness annual report 2005-06, sections 1 and 2; human resources and employment ministry annual report 2005-06; Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation 2005-06 annual report; Alberta innovation and science annual report 2005-06; international and intergovernmental relations annual report 2005-06; Alberta Justice annual report 2005-06; Alberta municipal affairs annual report 2005-06; restructuring and government efficiency annual report 2005-06; Alberta Seniors and Community Supports annual report 2005-06; Alberta Solicitor General and public security annual report 2005-06; Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development annual report 2005-06.

3:50

On behalf of the hon. Dr. Oberg, Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Government Accountability Act the Budget '06 2006-07 quarterly budget report, second-quarter fiscal update, and second-quarter activity report.

Pursuant to the Conflicts of Interest Act and the Legislative Assembly Act the report of selected payments to members and former Members of the Legislative Assembly and persons directly associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2006.

Pursuant to the provincial judges and masters in chambers registered and unregistered pension plans regulation the provincial judges and masters in chambers registered and unregistered pension plans annual report for the year ended March 31, 2006.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Snelgrove, President of the Treasury Board, report entitled General Revenue Fund, Details of Grants, Supplies and Services, Capital Assets and Other, by Payee for the year ended March 31, 2006.

On behalf of Mr. Johnston, chair, Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee, Alberta heritage savings trust fund '06-07 second-quarter update for the six months ended September 30, 2006.

head:

Projected Government Business

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I could prevail upon my colleague the Government House Leader to tell us what is on the projected government business for next week, beginning the 12th of March.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, March 12, at 9 p.m. consistent with the current Standing Orders we would move to government business, and I would anticipate that at that time we would discuss the motion that I gave notice of motion of with respect to the Standing Orders, specifically relative to the sitting times and dates. Time permitting, there may be time for contemplation of the reply to the Speech from the Throne.

On Tuesday, March 13, anticipating a tabling of interim supply estimates, day 1 of estimates on supplementary supply, and response to the Speech from the Throne.

On Wednesday, March 14, introduction of a supplementary supply appropriation bill, under Orders of the Day interim supply, day 1 of 2, and response to the Speech from the Throne.

On Thursday, March 15, under Orders of the Day, Bill 4 for second reading, the supplementary appropriation bill for second reading, interim supply, day 2 of 2, and response to the Speech from the Throne.

head:

Orders of the Day

Transmittal of Estimates

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, I have received a certain message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province of Alberta for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, when a second or subsequent set of estimates is to be tabled, section 8 of the Government Accountability Act requires that an amended fiscal plan also be tabled. Accordingly, I wish to table the 2006-2007 quarterly budget report for the third quarter, which serves as the amended fiscal plan. This quarterly report was provided to all MLAs on February 26. I also made the report public as required by section 9 of the Government Accountability Act.

Also being tabled, Mr. Speaker, is the third-quarter update for the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, the quarterly report tabled by the Minister of Finance provides the fiscal framework for the additional spending authority for five departments of the government.

I now wish to table the 2006-07 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2. These will provide the additional spending authority for the five departments of the government. When passed, the estimates

will authorize increases of about \$394 million in voted expense and equipment/inventory purchases. Mr. Speaker, these estimates will also authorize a \$530,000 transfer of previously voted capital investment from the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation to the Department of Service Alberta.

head: **Government Motions**

4. Mr. Snelgrove moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly do resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion.

[Government Motion 4 carried]

5. Mr. Snelgrove moved:
Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2006-07 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this motion is a debatable motion.

Having no interest from anyone, the hon. President of the Treasury Board to close the debate?

[Government Motion 5 carried]

6. Mr. Snelgrove moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(9) the number of days that Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 2006-07 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund shall be one day.

The Speaker: That motion is nondebatable, so we'll call the question.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

Committee Membership Changes

7. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that the following changes to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved: that Mr. Oberle replace Mr. Knight as deputy chair, that Ms Pastoor replace Mr. Backs, that Mr. Graydon replace Mr. Lindsay, that Mr. Mar replace Mrs. Jablonski, that Mr. Melchin replace Mr. Lukaszuk.

The Speaker: Under Standing Order 52(3) this is a motion that is nondebatable, so I'm going to call the question.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

Committee Membership Changes

8. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that the following changes to the Select Special Personal Information Protection Act Review Committee be approved: that Mr. VanderBurg replace Mr. Goudreau as deputy chair, that Ms Blakeman replace Mr. Backs, that Mr. Coutts replace Mr. Johnston, that Mr. Ducharme replace Mr. Liepert, that Mr. Graydon replace Mr. Lindsay, that Mr. Lund replace Mr. Lougheed, that Mr. McFarland replace Mr. Rodney, that Mr. Webber replace Mr. Snelgrove.

The Speaker: Under Standing Order 18(1)(h) this motion is

debatable. Are there any hon. members wishing to participate? The hon. Government House Leader to close the debate?

[Government Motion 8 carried]

9. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

The Speaker: And this motion is nondebatable, so I'll call the question.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

The Speaker: I'm going to call on the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The hon. member advised the chair that he would be providing some words in French as part of his speech, and he also advised the chair that as a courtesy to all hon. members he'd be providing the translation for it. The chair appreciates the hon. member calling the chair, but the hon. member did not have to call the chair.

4:00

Under the Languages Act of Alberta French or English may be spoken in this Assembly at any time, and it's not a requirement that any member provide a translation. So it was a great courtesy that the chair would like to acknowledge and would like to say thank you to the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In the future hon. members will know that that's the way it goes. There's not a requirement to provide a translation, but it would be a courtesy to provide a translation.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

head: **Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Mr. Ducharme moved that a humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member for the vibrant constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake it is a great honour to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne, given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. I would like to thank the Lieutenant Governor for reading the Speech from the Throne to open the Third Session of the 26th Legislature. Once again you have delivered it with such grace. Thank you for setting the tone for the Assembly as one of respect and cordiality.

As you have heard from His Honour's speech, there are many exciting initiatives in the works for Alberta. These will build on the prosperity of Alberta and ensure that the well-being of our province and citizens is fully considered and acted on.

The new year brought in a lot of change for our province. Alberta headed in a new direction when the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville was sworn into office December 14, 2006, as Alberta's 13th Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Premier for allowing me to move the acceptance of the Speech from the Throne. As this is the first of many speeches from the throne under his leadership, I am truly honoured and humbled to have the opportunity to deliver this speech during such a memorable time.

I would like to offer my support to the new Premier. I am fully confident in his ability to lead Alberta to a robust and prosperous tomorrow. Furthermore, I am an ardent advocate of his vision and priorities for Alberta. Mr. Speaker, he will join the ranks of the long list of Premiers who have worked so diligently to place Alberta where it is today.

On that note, on behalf of Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituents I would like to thank the past Premier, the hon. Ralph Klein, for his 14 years of leadership. It was a great privilege to be part of his team, and we wish him the best of luck in all of his future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of hard work and sacrifice from all Albertans to attain the standing we are in now. This new government will ensure that Alberta remains a world leader in economic terms and as a model of quality of life.

Je veux remercier tous les Albertains pour leur soutien continu, qui nous a amené au point où nous sommes aujourd'hui.

It takes a lot of work to be a world leader. We must continue working hard and driving ourselves to exceed all expectations. As the Honourable Lieutenant Governor stated yesterday, we must build on the work and sacrifices that we made in the past to make our prosperity continue to flourish.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to warmly welcome the new ministers in this government. I am confident they will prove to be a strong Executive Council, which will meet the Premier's vision for Alberta. Ministers, rest assured that your private member government colleagues will assist and support you along the way.

Now that Alberta has been established as a model in terms of economic growth, the Premier will lead Alberta to steadfast sustainability, opportunity, and elevated well-being. While our new Premier has only been in power for a few months, he has been tirelessly consulting with Albertans. I commend him for all the efforts he has put forth to allow Alberta to continue being a province of the people.

As was highlighted by His Honour, the Premier has set a direction by which he will govern. Everything this government does will be conducted in a responsible and prudent way to ensure that the right thing is being done for Alberta. A large part of the new government's focus is on being mindful of future generations. Alberta will be left not only in the best economic condition possible; it will be passed down in a secure state for our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. This means safer communities, the best education system, a sound environment, and responsibly managed resources among others.

Mr. Speaker, it says a lot about this government that its first priority is to govern with integrity and transparency. The Premier has stated that this is his mission because Albertans want to be involved in the process of building on Alberta's prosperity. I would like to commend Albertans for that. Our new government realizes that Alberta cannot be properly guided unless it is done by all Albertans. Albertans know what they want, and we in the Legislature are here to make it happen on their behalf. We will work as a team to achieve the goals that we as a province have set for ourselves. That means that the new government will be seeking to achieve Alberta's goals through co-operation with all stakeholders. That is the only way we will achieve true prosperity and well-being.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier has already put forth a plan to get closer to achieving a truly transparent and open government. His very first bill presented in the House was the Lobbyists Act. With this act Albertans will clearly know who is seeking to influence the direction of Alberta and who is working for Albertans.

Furthermore, this new government recently made a commitment

to make flight logs and expenses of ministers and their staff public. These are unprecedented steps, which provide accountability and transparency within government. After only a few months in power Alberta's Premier has already provided Albertans with tangible proof of his commitment to increase transparency and accountability. Nous désirons que les Albertains soient informés par rapport aux événements qui se passe dans leur nouveau gouvernement.

Albertans and Canadians alike have been benefiting tremendously from Alberta's economic expansion. As a result of this growth we are seeing more opportunity and an improved quality of life for all Albertans. When rapid growth occurs, adjustments need to be made. Issues must be addressed in order for expansion to be executed in an acceptable manner. This government realizes that issues surrounding growth affect all Albertans. This government's priority on growth management will ensure that expansion is conducted in a manner which is directed by foresight.

Mr. Speaker, housing pressures are an issue being felt in every corner of the province. In my constituency the Cold Lake Affordable Housing Society is working diligently to address this need. I would like to thank them for their work. They are a prime example of community members coming together to create a stronger Alberta. Addressing access to affordable housing is an important part of improving Albertans' quality of life.

Through his travels throughout the province the Premier has come across the need for housing in an overwhelming fashion. Decisive action is being taken to address the situation. This government wants all Albertans to have access to Albertans' quality of life and prosperity. I would like to commend the Premier for mandating the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to create a housing task force. The task force will find innovative ways of addressing this situation. I look forward to hearing the results of this report. I am sure I will have great things to report back to my constituents.

The Premier has also put one of the most dedicated and driven MLAs to task on the labour situation in Alberta. The hon. Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry has already been extremely busy working on ways to attract immigrants to Alberta. She has been mandated to enhance the co-ordination of economic development, immigration, and labour-force planning in Alberta. She and her department will create a made-in-Alberta strategy to quell the labour shortage. As the new chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council I would like to assure her that the council will assist her in every possible way to achieve her goals.

Of course, increasing Alberta's labour pool will require other Canadians and immigrants to come to Alberta. The new government has committed itself to welcoming new Canadians into Alberta through support in communities. Je suis fier de dire que l'Alberta est une province multiculturelle croissante. Notre province accueille des gens de diverses origines, tel que française, ukrainienne, polonaise, chinoise, pakistanaise, indienne, vietnamienne, et beaucoup d'autres. Je suis certain que les communautés à travers la province de l'Alberta accueilleront ces gens à bras ouverts.

Mr. Speaker, I for one can say that my constituency will welcome immigrants from all across the world to our communities. As Alberta's economy continues to grow, these new Albertans will add their expertise and manpower to further enhance our prosperity and quality of life. Members of my constituency and I do not want to see growth stilted by a lack of labour. On behalf of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency I would like to encourage this government and the hon. Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry to do everything in their power to address labour shortages by working to promote Alberta as a world-class destination for immigrants.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also especially pleased to see a renewed commitment to increase support for First Nations and Métis skills training and labour force. There are many aboriginal communities in my constituency which will be pleased to hear that this govern-

ment is committed to working with them to help increase their quality of life.

As I have said many times before in this House, the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake is one of the most beautiful areas in Alberta. The environment is a matter which my constituents take to heart. We are all so very pleased that under the leadership of the Minister of Environment the environment will be addressed in a real and tangible manner. I was happy to hear from the Honourable Lieutenant Governor that our new government will work with Albertans to turn environmental challenges into opportunities. That is what we do in Alberta. We are an innovative people.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to thank the residents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake for all of their efforts to conserve the environment. Each attempt we make to help the environment will benefit all Albertans now and into the future. My constituents and I look forward to the implementation of the climate change plan. I am proud to be part of a government that is establishing the first emission intensity reduction targets for industrial emitters in Canada. This government will work toward ensuring that our environment remains sound for tomorrow.

As a resident and a representative of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency I am reassured that our new government is going to manage Alberta's water supply. Living near beautiful bodies of water, I know that water is a precious commodity that cannot be squandered. The Water for Life strategy has led us well in the past and will continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, as the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake continues to grow, there is an increasing demand for land. Distributing land across various sectors is a challenging task. The government's new land-use strategy will help my constituents and other Albertans find a balance to coexist. Agricultural, industrial, and housing needs can all be met with a strong plan. Je suis fière de vous dire que la qualité de vie est extraordinaire dans notre province. Nous avons de bonnes écoles pour nos jeunes, beaucoup d'occasion pour trouver de l'ouvrage, et de nombreux services sociaux pour nos aînées. Il n'y a simplement pas de comparaison au Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there is more to being an Albertan than accessing economic prosperity. Being part of this province also means living well, safely and comfortably. This is why so many people are moving to Alberta and are staying here to raise their families. The new government is working on Alberta's education system because we know that an elevated quality of life is directly linked to working and attaining one's potential. We want to give Albertans access to all resources possible to achieve this.

Another component of enhancing Albertan's quality of life is ensuring that this province has a health care system which meets the needs of Albertans. The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and his department will be working hard to find innovative ways of providing health care to all Albertans. As Alberta is growing, it is imperative that we take steps to grow our health care force in order to match the need. To that end achieving a health workforce for the future will be an aspect that the hon. minister will work diligently to achieve. This government will be committed to achieving community-based approaches to provide support to those in need. As Alberta's population is aging, this government will be working hard to expand the province's long-term care capacity. Mr. Speaker, these efforts will in turn increase their quality of life.

During my travels across Alberta I have been overwhelmed by the ways Albertans are more than happy to lend a helping hand to those in need. I am pleased that the Premier is working to create the community spirit program for charitable giving. Through the

community spirit fund the government will support and enhance charitable donations in Alberta.

In order to achieve safer communities in Alberta, the Premier has mandated the hon. Minister of Justice to lead a crime reduction and safe communities task force. Safer communities will prove to elevate all Albertans' quality of life and strengthen Alberta. As our province grows larger, it will also grow safer. This government will strive to create an environment where children, senior citizens, and the vulnerable will not have to worry about their safety in Alberta's neighbourhoods. We are committed to enhancing all of Albertans' feelings of security as that is part of a high quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier's final priority is to build a stronger Alberta. This priority affects many aspects of Alberta; however, a distinct list has been formulated to outline what exactly the Premier aims to work on. As the Honourable Lieutenant Governor indicated yesterday, the government will conduct a review of the resources royalty system so that Albertans can know that they are getting the right amount of revenue from their resources. Furthermore, in the months to come this new government will develop strategies to diversify sources of energy and will encourage upgrading of nonrenewable resources. This government is committed to securing energy sources for today and far into the future.

In order to create stronger municipalities, the government recently announced that it is giving \$1.4 billion to help manage infrastructure needs. This funding will be met with a long-term funding arrangement to address the tremendous growth pressures communities are facing. I am certain that the municipal governments in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency will be happy with this funding increase. Funding will help them meet the infrastructure needs of our region.

Because revenues have been spent wisely in Alberta over the last decade and the province has economic prosperity today, the value of fiscal prudence will continue with this government. One example of this value put into action is the surplus management policy that will be released in the 2007 budget. Mr. Speaker, in order to sustain and enhance our current level of prosperity, we must focus on widening our sources of expertise and revenue. This province's innovation and drive towards the energy sector has led Alberta to be an economic powerhouse. We need to continue driving forward and look at other ways to sustain our wealth. That is why this government is taking a serious look at diversifying our economy. We will be a stronger province if we have a broader base of industries. Investing in Alberta's knowledge base is an exciting way to make our province more attractive to the smartest minds in the world. It will also place Alberta on the path to a successful future.

With a focus on knowledge such as nanotechnology Alberta will be ready for tomorrow's competitive global markets, and we will continue to be a leader. Nous pouvons et nous allons le faire. I look forward to the Third Session of the 26th Legislature under the lead of Alberta's 13th Premier as we work to further all Albertans' quality of life.

In closing, I would like to once again thank the constituents from Bonnyville-Cold Lake for granting me the opportunity to represent them in the Legislature during these exciting times. Merci. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am privileged to have the opportunity to second the Speech from the Throne. I would like to commend our hon. Lieutenant Governor for delivering the speech yesterday and providing us with an inspirational vision for this legislative session. The government's plan addresses key priorities

that focus on some of the most important issues facing Albertans today. The priorities are centred on rededicating our Legislature to ensure that our government fulfills our potential and achieves our objectives.

When I arrived in Alberta as a young soldier in 1970, the province was different in many aspects. The price of a barrel of oil was around \$12 U.S. Our population was around 1.5 million, and hit songs included Diana Ross's *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*. Perhaps the hon. member from Lougheed can relate to that. Number 2 was The Beatles' *Let It Be*. So that says it all.

Alberta was developing, and over the course of time we have experienced many changes, exciting changes that have demonstrated the resolve and the passion of Albertans to further themselves and their communities. I do not believe that any of us could have predicted the successes that we would experience and the accomplishments that we would achieve.

Although our province has changed over the course of time, our unique values such as fiscal responsibility, entrepreneurial spirit, and self-dependence still resonate among Albertans today. The people of my constituency of Calgary-Hays believe in this province, and their positive attitude is reflected throughout Alberta. Albertans have a determined attitude, and their positive work ethic contributes to making this province a pre-eminent leader in Canada and throughout the world. Alberta continues to lead in many economic areas, and our province maintains the highest employment rate in the country.

I am enthusiastic about the ambitious agenda that has been set forth for this Legislature, and I am encouraged to work with all of my colleagues to meet the needs and priorities of Albertans. As the hon. Lieutenant Governor stated yesterday, we want to "govern with integrity and transparency." I believe this is a foundation for all government that is open, honest, and recognizes that we are here to do the respectable job that our fellow citizens entrusted us with. We are their representatives, and it is essential that we continue to satisfy their concerns with the urgency and efficiency that they expect.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech outlined a strategy for dealing with the enormous growth pressures that our province is currently experiencing. I believe that we are addressing these issues throughout Alberta, specifically in Calgary-Hays where we will soon benefit from the service of the new south Calgary hospital. Albertans are experiencing the impact of a continually expanding economy, and I believe that our government has a great opportunity to facilitate the construction of needed schools, roads, and hospitals. I am confident that we will develop a comprehensive plan to analyze the priority areas and provide the funding necessary to build and meet the infrastructure needs of all constituencies.

It is also encouraging that our government has collaborated with the private sector to expedite the construction of the new section of the Calgary ring road, and I hope that the construction will continue to progress in the southeast section of the city in order to alleviate heavy traffic. The extension of the Calgary ring road serves multiple purposes such as reducing commute times, improving safety conditions, and decreasing the depreciation of our roads.

I am convinced that our province's agreement with municipalities, providing them with \$1.5 billion in annual funding, is an important decision. I can assure this Assembly that the funding is needed and will be beneficial in assisting communities to meet their growing infrastructure demands.

I am encouraged by our government's commitment to improving Albertans' health and wellness. I believe that we need to continue this great strategy by providing and maintaining adequate sporting and recreational facilities. We need to motivate Albertans to be active. The benefits of an active lifestyle are numerous. We want

to encourage a health-conscious society so Albertans comprehend the added incentives to taking care of their bodies and participating in athletic events and pursuits.

4:20

Albertans value their economic prosperity; however, it should not impede their quality of life. My constituents recognize that they do not want well sites in close proximity to their community. They, as do most Albertans, believe in furthering economic development, but they recommend that it be done in a responsible and conscientious manner that furthers environmental stewardship and respects the boundaries of neighbourhoods. We want to develop a sustainable economy that has a diversified energy sector in order to extend the longevity of Alberta's prosperity.

We should continue to provide funding to initiatives that represent new opportunities for Albertans. I am inspired by the capabilities of our province, and I believe that creating stronger postsecondary programs will be important to securing Alberta's economic prominence in the coming years. I have members of my family who are currently enrolled in universities, and I understand the issues that students throughout the province are coping with. This government plans to address those issues. We have recently seen funding to increase the number of available spots for students in the health care field, and money has been allocated to support advanced technological research.

I also want to echo the objectives of the throne speech that focus on building a stronger Alberta. We are in an enviable position and have an opportunity to build on our successes by developing alternative energies and focusing on environmental sustainability. We cannot predict the future, but we can prepare with sound fiscal planning and innovative economic development. This type of preparedness will contribute to ensuring that we are investing in tomorrow's future by funding research and encouraging the talents of Albertans.

We will continue to diversify our economy and strive to reach our full potential. There is great opportunity in renewable energy sources such as bioenergy, wind, solar, and hydroelectric, all of which are examples of alternatives that represent a stronger, more diverse energy sector. As our province grows, our consumption increases, and it is important that we urge modernization and responsible use of our resources. We want to extend the benefits we currently enjoy to future generations.

Mr. Speaker, the priorities outlined by the Lieutenant Governor reflect a desire of Albertans. I believe that our priorities represent the many special individuals throughout Alberta. Some of these individuals, including those who have chosen to join the Canadian armed forces, these men and women are choosing to make the ultimate commitment as a citizen. I believe we have an obligation to support these dedicated Albertans, and I want to acknowledge their selfless sacrifice in assisting those in distress, despair, and fear. Having served, myself, for 11 years with the Canadian armed forces, I personally understand the diligence and loyalty to our country that our military personnel in Afghanistan are demonstrating both as full-time and reservist soldiers. These individuals recognize a need to volunteer their service for the betterment of our province and our country. The dedicated men and women of our armed forces face dangerous challenges abroad. I commend their efforts.

I also want to acknowledge the competent individuals in our police services who are engaged in the effort to address the safety and security concerns in our communities here in Alberta. These brave individuals are sworn to protect and ensure the safety of Albertans throughout this province. Their jobs can often be thankless, stressful, and demanding, but they carry out their duties

because they have made a commitment to the people of Alberta.

Providing safe and secure communities is a priority that I believe in strongly. As a 25-year veteran of the Calgary Police Service I've always believed that we need to make a concerted, concentrated effort toward crime prevention and reduction of crime. We need to continue to protect our communities from illegal and unsafe activities, ensuring that our cities and towns are filled with an atmosphere of co-operation and safety. Reducing hostility and violence in our neighbourhood is an objective of utmost importance. We should strive to continue to provide sufficient support for our police services and their efforts to secure our communities.

The hon. Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne highlighted priorities that reflect what Albertans feel are the most important issues to them. The speech provided a thoughtful, comprehensive account of our ambitions for this Legislature, and I am sure that this government will continually strive to fulfill these priorities. Mr. Speaker, individuals are coming to this province, just as I did many years ago, with aspirations of finding a successful career, creating a family, and being an active citizen. I am proud of the many men and women who are dedicating themselves to bettering their communities, their province, and their country. I am honoured to have the opportunity to diligently work every day to ensure that Albertans can continue to realize the benefits and experiences that this province affords us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my constituents in Edmonton-Riverview, of all Albertans, and as Leader of the Official Opposition it's my duty and my privilege to respond to the Speech from the Throne delivered in this Assembly yesterday. I'm entitled to spend 90 minutes doing this. I'll try to keep my comments to no more than 85.

According to the Premier, the first priority of this administration is to govern with integrity, and we will help him to do that. As one columnist from the *Calgary Herald* wrote earlier this week: there is integrity, and then there is integrity. In other words, there's a vast difference between actions that give the appearance of integrity and those that reveal true integrity.

The throne speech delivered yesterday paid lip service to government transparency and accountability, promising a few timid steps forward toward a more open and accountable government, steps that have been taken in other provinces decades ago. Of course, we applaud the adoption of a few of the Alberta Liberal ideas that we've been advocating for so long, such as the long-overdue lobbyist registry, and making credit card expenses public is a nice gesture and an important one, though the lack of detail and context makes it nearly impossible to judge whether or not public funds were used in the public interest: timid steps at a time when Albertans are demanding a bold leap forward. Alberta needs a fully accountable, transparent government and a renewed robust democracy to meet the challenges ahead. Half measures won't cut it anymore. It's time to think big and to take action.

Alberta Liberal MLAs have spent months meeting with Albertans across the province, and the message we received is loud and clear. Albertans want open, accountable government, and they want their government to lead the way forward to a sustainable future. That's what an Alberta Liberal government would deliver because Alberta Liberals know that government honesty, accountability, and transparency aren't just abstract ideals. These qualities protect Albertans and ensure that their tax dollars are being used honestly and effectively. Alberta Liberals know that creating a sustainable

economy is not simply a dream for down the road but an absolute necessity that we must pursue aggressively to protect our environment and our way of life.

So how would an Alberta Liberal government achieve these goals? Well, first we'll get democracy and Alberta back on track. Democracy is so much more than election day, so much more than a means of hiring a few MLAs every few years. It's a living, breathing tool. It's meant to serve and protect real people, real Albertans. It's the most precious instrument of government accountability, and in Alberta it's long overdue for a tune-up.

A strong robust democracy could have protected seniors from neglect and abuse in Alberta's long-term care facilities. It could have prevented energy deregulation, which has cost Albertans billions of dollars in skyrocketing power bills, and the need to subsidize those bills to keep them under control. It could have saved untrained, unprotected workers from exposure to deadly asbestos at Calgary's Holy Cross hospital. It could have forced this government to develop a solid plan for managing Alberta's growth while protecting our environment. It's time to fix the tools Albertans need to hold the government accountable, and it's time for the governments we elect to make openness and accountability not merely a sound bite but an everyday reality.

4:30

In contrast to this government's timid steps forward toward accountability and openness I offer what an Alberta Liberal government will do to renew democracy in Alberta. Albertans value freedom, fairness, trust, honesty, and accountability. If Alberta is to meet the challenge and opportunity the future presents, government must nurture those values and provide a structure in which they can flourish.

Here's how an Alberta Liberal government will get Alberta's democracy back on track. First, fixed election dates. Election schedules should be free from political manipulation. They should occur at predictable intervals rather than at the whim of the party in power. Voters already enjoy fixed election dates in British Columbia and in Ontario. Albertans deserve this same respect from their provincial government.

Next, electoral reform. The more people who vote, the more legitimate and accountable the government. In the last election less than 45 per cent of Albertans bothered to come to the polls. That is unacceptable. Many would be more likely to vote if our electoral system reflected voter intent more accurately and if people who voted for the losing party weren't consistently disenfranchised the moment the results are in. An Alberta Liberal government would organize a citizens' assembly on electoral reform to determine if other voting systems, including proportional representation, which Alberta once had, could improve participation in our democracy. Citizens should be able to choose not merely which party takes power but how their governments are elected.

Campaign financing also needs to be changed. No one should be able to buy the loyalty of our elected officials. An Alberta Liberal government would limit corporate and union donations to \$5,000, and that \$5,000 could not be used to buy exclusive access to the Premier or his ministers. Furthermore, party leadership campaigns would be subject to legislative rules to ensure that the process of leadership selection is transparent and accountable.

Renewing the democratic process is the first step in getting democracy back on track. It's equally important to bring accountability back to government. A government that can be easily held to account for its actions is far more likely to govern in the best interests of Albertans. We are ready to bring some accountability back to government right now. This session my colleague the hon.

Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie will sponsor a bill to reverse one of the most appalling laws passed by this government, last year's legislation that hides the results of internal audits for 15 years after completion. What is this government afraid of? Albertans will find out if the MLAs in this House have the courage to vote for our bill.

The next thing we need to do to bring integrity back to government is to eliminate conflicts of interest. Whenever someone in a position of power can exploit the system for personal gain, democracy has a serious problem. Alberta's conflict of interest rules and oversights are incredibly weak compared to other provinces and the federal government. To protect Albertans from conflicts of interest, an Alberta Liberal government would make sure that ex-politicians and senior political officials wait one year before taking jobs where they could influence government, and we would restructure the Legislative Offices Committee so that the selection of the Ethics Commissioner and other Legislature officers is less dominated by the party in power.

In a political system bogged down by years of Tory inertia, complacency, and entitlement, it takes courage for Albertans to stand up and reveal government incompetence or corruption. They've often done so at the cost of their own jobs. We believe Albertans have the right to speak out against wrongdoing, so we'll protect whistle-blowers with legislation. In a real democracy people don't have to be afraid to speak out.

And what about this very building, this physical embodiment of democracy? This government has a habit of spending as little time as possible engaged in debate, making snide references to "dome disease." Mr. Speaker, democracy is not a disease, so we shouldn't be treating this institution as if spending a little more time here will kill us. For example, when we last debated the Health and Wellness section of the budget, we were doing so at a rate of a million dollars a minute. How can we possibly hold the government accountable at such a pace?

When the Alberta Liberals form government, we'll invite the opposition to spend some time with us here under the dome to revisit the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The act is intended, it is claimed, to give Albertans access to important government documents. In the best case this information can be used to help ordinary Albertans hold their government accountable, but as it stands, requests through FOIP can take months to process and cost thousands of dollars. Often requests are delayed, refused, or made unaffordable for purely political ends. We would amend the freedom of information legislation to ensure that Albertans get timely, affordable access to government publications, and we would end political interference in processing FOIP requests, including penalties for such interference. That, Mr. Speaker, is just a sample of what an Alberta Liberal government would do to get democracy back on track.

What about the priority that's taken the world by storm: creating a sustainable future? Well, as Mark Twain said, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did." So let's not disappoint ourselves. Let's make sure that Albertans of the future will look back 20 years and say: "Aha. That's when the government finally woke up and took action on climate change and sustainability."

Is that what they'll really be saying? I don't know. A lot can happen in 20 years. It's hard to look that far into the future. None of us has a crystal ball to gaze into. It's human nature to imagine a future where everything is pretty much the same. We might allow for a few small changes. In 20 years we'll all look 10 years older, but that's about it. We lose track of time.

Scrambling to live in the now, we miss how much has changed, but if we don't register where we are today, imagine thinking back

20 years. Imagine all the way back to 1987 or even earlier. Things that we thought would last forever back then have disappeared today. Things that we now take for granted as always part of our lives, many didn't even exist in 1987.

Just 20 years ago there was no Internet, no World Wide Web. Personal computers were both pretty exotic and pretty slow. We listened to records or cassettes. There were certainly no DVDs. We shopped at places like Eaton's and Woodward's, and we thought we would forever. There were no Wal-Marts in Canada, and Starbucks was little more than one coffee bean shop in Seattle. The Berlin wall loomed over western Europe, the Iron Curtain hung heavy, and the notion of China and India as world industrial powers was almost absurd. In 1987 the last boom in Alberta had gone bust. Twenty years ago you could buy a repossessed house for a buck, and you couldn't give away office space in Calgary.

As we try to plan for a world 20 years from today, what do we see? Well, of course, nobody knows for sure, but there are experts, and there are predictions. We'd better listen pretty hard because in 1987 you could read about digital video recording coming. You could hear rumblings about the problems with Eaton's. You could see reports about potential growth in China. Of course, not every prediction is right on the money, but by the time the world reaches consensus, from a planning perspective it's often a little too late.

The world abounds with examples. How well did Kodak and Fuji plan for digital cameras? Did you know that in 1950, Mr. Speaker, there were well over 50 coal mines in the Drumheller Valley. By 1960 there were fewer than 20. In 1970 there was one. The coal is still there, but the market had changed. The railways had switched to diesel, and homes had switched to natural gas. Remember the words of Charles Darwin: "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

As leader of the Alberta Liberal caucus I've often said publicly that in the medium to long term, the next 15 to 20 years and beyond, the issue that will overtake all others will be climate change. We aren't jumping on the bandwagon. Like scientists, we've been on the record on climate change for years, and we've duked that issue out in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

Holdout by holdout the ranks of the climate change deniers have grown smaller and smaller day by day. Scientists got there first, but we expect scientists to be on the cutting edge. Many people, many people in Alberta, felt that until consensus is wider spread, the message can and should be doubted.

Then just a few weeks ago, after the world-wide science community said that the time for discussion was over and after Prime Minister Stephen Harper said that it's no longer in doubt and years after the Alberta Liberals demanded action to deal with the problem, came the words of Jeff Rubin, chief economist for CIBC World Markets. Just several weeks ago Jeff Rubin, an economist whose job it is to recognize world economic trends before they take hold, had this to say: "Governments are waging a war on carbon." Not "will be," "are." He didn't mean the government in Ottawa or this government here in Edmonton. He meant governments around the world: in Washington and Tokyo, in London and Berlin, in Stockholm and Seoul.

We as legislators must wake up to the fact that Albertans are in a race against time to secure this province's future because our financial security, the treasure that sets this government and this province apart, is hydrocarbons. Our economy is booming, and we have unparalleled opportunity because we sit on one of the biggest, most accessible, secure, and productive deposits of carbon in the

world. The threat? Well, carbon, when it's used as a fuel with today's technologies, releases carbon dioxide, the leading contributor to climate change. Addressing climate change has become a national mission for a rapidly increasing number of countries and a corporate mission for a growing list of businesses. As a result billions of dollars a year are being spent across Europe, Japan, and the United States to find alternatives to carbon-based fuels. Sooner or later those efforts will succeed. They are already succeeding.

Of course, there is another threat to Alberta from climate change. Alberta's landscape isn't immune to the effects of climate change. Far from it. In fact, Alberta faces a double jeopardy as both the financial value of our energy resources and the health of our land and water are threatened.

When the Alberta Liberals ask hard questions in this House about water planning, about the mountain pine beetle, or about climate change, too often we're refused constructive and honest answers. But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, our glaciers are receding faster than ever in recorded history, the glaciers that feed our rivers that help supply our drinking water. The sky isn't falling, but the wind now carries the mountain pine beetle. Our winters used to be cold enough to make Alberta immune. Now our forests are infested.

The world hasn't arrived at a carbon neutral economy yet, but eventually it will. When it does, where will Alberta be? Will we be like Kodak or Fuji, left on the sidelines? Will Alberta be like the coal mines of Drumheller, or is Alberta ready to adapt? Are Albertans ready to stare the future in the face and make it blink?

We can be ready under a different kind of government. I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that it has to be an Alberta Liberal government. Unlike the current government, which is locked in the past, looking for excuses not to adapt, frightened of change, an Alberta Liberal government accepts the science and embraces the need for change and the opportunities that come with it. An Alberta Liberal government would understand that this is going to take the efforts of us all. We understand that we cannot meet this challenge by pitting one sector against another, by speaking only of the costs and the problems and the reasons not to get on with the job. If Alberta is to win this race, it is going to take the concerted effort of individuals, corporations and labour and government, of oil and gas companies and electric companies and farmers and universities and homeowners. The time of divide and conquer must come to an end. We have to work together.

How long do we have? How long will it be before the world's war on carbon is won? Of course, no one knows, but we need a target. The prudent answer is 20 years, and if 20 years seems far in the distance, remember that the starting line is right here, right now. Twenty years to secure our fiscal future. Twenty years to ensure that we are not casualties of the world's war on carbon and that we are not casualties of climate change itself. But we must start now. To a politician 20 years is a long time, but to the rest of us it's on the horizon, and to those of us with kids, it's like tomorrow.

Alberta needs direction that unites people across all sectors of society with a singular purpose to a destination that unites issues into a singular agenda so that actions can build strength upon strength. We have the time frame and the reason for the journey. We need a map and the leadership to get us there. Under an Alberta Liberal government Alberta's destination would be clear and unwavering: to be a world leader in addressing climate change in real and absolute terms. Today Canada is last among developed nations in addressing climate change. Despite the claims of this government, Alberta is last among provinces. In 20 years we must be first and a leader not just in Canada but in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to directly address for a moment Alberta's petroleum sector, which understandably watches these debates with

great anxiety. I don't just mean the executive in downtown Calgary. I mean the young woman on the survey crew outside of Medicine Hat or the aboriginal entrepreneur hiring members from his band up at Fort MacKay. Alberta's petroleum sector is nothing less than an astonishing success story. We're global, we're competitive, we're comprehensive, and we're fully integrated. Because of Alberta, I would argue, Canada is to the world's petroleum industry what Germany is to the world's automotive industry. We are that important, that successful, that big.

From the shop in Edmonton where Jeanette's and my youngest son cut steel for equipment made in Alberta and shipped around the world, to the executives who lead projects off the coast of Asia and Africa, to the financiers who put the capital together, our industry is a global leader headquartered, led, driven, engineered, staffed, designed, and constructed right here in Alberta. For productivity, for expertise, for leadership the world's petroleum industry turns to Alberta. There is no other sector in Canada – none – that has the same global product reach, the technological edge, the complete integration from research and development right through to product delivery and every single step in between. The fundamental end product is carbon, but our real export is know-how.

So to the petroleum industry I say: work with us. We will seize this opportunity to collaborate. The carbon assets that you rely on are the carbon assets that make the people of Alberta prosperous. Let's harness the ingenuity, the creativity, the leadership that brought us to this point to get us to the next, to drive us to the world-wide goal of a carbon-neutral economy with all the energy we can muster. With the astonishing skills and expertise this province possesses, we will succeed. We must. We have no other choice. Industry leaders have told me they are ready, willing, and able. It is the current government that is holding things back.

4:50

The University of Calgary recently reported that oil and gas accounts for 50 per cent of Alberta's economy – 50 per cent – half the jobs, half of this government's revenue, half our personal wealth from the petroleum sector. So taking a hands-off approach, as this government is inclined to do, to a world at war with carbon is not an option. Too much is at stake. We have to work together. We have to respond to change – petroleum producers, labour unions, universities, and interest groups – because the threat doesn't come from action, Mr. Speaker, but from inaction and because we are all of us, everyone of us, Albertans, and we are in this together.

Mr. Speaker, here are some specifics of our plan to deal with climate change. Let me deal first with the most tortured and unpleasant subject: relations between Alberta and Ottawa. Fellow members, it is time to get past the sabre-rattling. Of course, Alberta's natural resources belong to the people of Alberta, and any threat to that will be fought intensely by an Alberta Liberal government, no matter which federal party is in power. That's why we need leadership now. The climate change issue is not being driven by Ottawa but by Europe and Japan, by Washington and California. It's not Ottawa that will leave Alberta behind; it is the world. The world will leave Alberta and Canada behind if we do not adapt, face the threat together, and together meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities. Let us break bread as citizens of one great country.

With an ever-tightening 20-year deadline to address climate change, there is no time to waste. An Alberta Liberal government will move immediately on several fronts. First, we'll aggressively implement a strategy to capture carbon dioxide emissions from major sources and sequester them deep underground. It's now technically feasible, and a financial framework can be worked out.

If that is in fact being announced today at Government House, we will support that initiative. Five years from now, the Alberta Liberals believe, we can have a system up and running. Five years and we can begin making an absolute reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Second, we'll implement an aggressive greening of the electricity sector. Within 10 years enough power will be generated from wind and other zero emission sources to power the equivalent of every home and farm in this province.

Third, an Alberta Liberal government will transform the natural gas rebate program to a self-sustaining building retrofit program. This will help Albertans pay for that new energy-efficient furnace or those new energy-efficient windows. Albertans will win with lower energy bills, and we all win by decreasing emissions. Why subsidize waste when we can reduce the use?

Fourth, we'll immediately establish a Premier's strategic council on carbon emissions and climate change with representatives from all sectors to engineer Alberta's drive to become a world leader in reducing carbon emissions.

And, fifth, we'll develop a long-term province-wide transportation strategy with a focus on rail and on public transit, including a route for a high-speed rail connection between Edmonton, Red Deer, and Calgary. It is time our airports, light rail transit railways, and roads worked together. Efficiency saves energy. The rest of the world is heading there. Why not Alberta?

These are the first steps to a sustainable environment under an Alberta Liberal government. But, Mr. Speaker, there is more to sustainability. An Alberta Liberal government will also secure a sustainable financial future. Our province has been flourishing with a government running huge surpluses funded by nonrenewable resource revenues. The key word there is nonrenewable. The current government has no strategy, no plan for managing those surpluses. It's a fiscal policy of stumble and drift. In the last 25 years the current government has spent over 93 per cent of all the petroleum royalties it has received – not invested, spent. That's on top of taxes, and it is not sustainable.

An Alberta Liberal government would be committed to converting Alberta's nonrenewable wealth into a permanent source of prosperity. During this session, the Alberta Liberal caucus will bring forward our flagship bill, the Funding Alberta's Future Act. Based on extensive research and reflecting policy we released last fall to widespread acclaim, our bill would direct the government to set aside 30 per cent of all nonrenewable resource revenues each year.

The largest portion would go to the heritage trust fund. In 20 years the Alberta government would earn more from the heritage fund than from energy's royalties. Mr. Speaker, if this House votes that down, Albertans will remember because with that bill for the first time in our history the Alberta government could have sustainable finances. No more roller-coaster rides, no more boom and bust, just quality public services and permanently competitive taxes.

This same act would secure the future of our most valuable resource: our people. How? Through education. This legislation will propose unprecedented endowment funds for postsecondary institutions, to pave the way for Alberta's postsecondary institutions to take their place among the best on the planet. Arts and culture: a real endowment to guarantee that our artists stay here where they belong.

We're not done there. As part of the same plan for fiscal sustainability the Alberta Liberal caucus would address the province's infrastructure debt head-on. Highway 63 to Fort McMurray, schools in Edmonton, hospitals in Calgary and Grande Prairie: it is all achievable; we've done the math.

Because it is so important to address the here and now, to touch people in their lives today, the Alberta Liberal caucus will bring in

a series of bills to improve everyday life for Albertans immediately. Because regional municipal planning and development are in such disarray, our shadow minister for municipal affairs and housing will introduce our sustainable communities act. Because we need to ensure an ongoing supply of water, this spring our shadow minister for the environment will introduce legislation to strengthen management of Alberta's water resources. Because Albertans are tired of being held hostage to groups like utility marketers and need help with things like landlord and tenant conflicts, our shadow minister for justice will introduce the Consumer Advocate Act to bring in real help.

Because so many Alberta families are caught in a province ranked near the bottom for child care in the entire country, our shadow minister for children's services will introduce the child care accountability and accessibility act to establish targets for the creation of new child care spaces. Because parents in Alberta are sick of soaring school fees for everything from books to computers, our shadow minister for education will introduce the restriction on school fees and fundraising act, ensuring that public education is properly funded from public sources.

Because the gaming industry in Alberta is multiplying into so many corners of our lives, our shadow minister for advanced education, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, will sponsor a bill to establish an all-party committee to review every aspect of gaming in Alberta from the role of volunteers to social problems to best management practices.

Because the best way to sustain our health care system is to protect the health of Albertans, our shadow minister for health and wellness will introduce a bill requiring health impact assessments of major government initiatives, much as we already do for environmental and social impact assessments, and as already mentioned, the Alberta Liberal caucus will bring forward a bill to reverse the government's decision to hide internal audits from Albertans.

We've come up with an ambitious agenda because Alberta is an ambitious province.

5:00

Our agenda lays the foundation for a sustainable, prosperous, and compassionate province because Albertans are demanding a sustainable, prosperous, and compassionate future. In contrast, Mr. Speaker, we've been warned to expect a, quote, light legislative agenda from the government this spring, a government with few ideas, little energy to enact them, and no particular focus.

I expect most of our bills will be voted down by our Conservative opposition. That's a shame because our agenda puts the public first, ahead of any consideration of party or politics. But Albertans will remember how their MLAs voted, and when it's time to choose the next government of Alberta, their memories will guide them.

The way things are now is not good enough, not good enough for Alberta, not good enough for the Alberta Liberals. The days of the rudderless autopilot, tax and spend, drift and stumble Conservatives have to end. They must. Coasting on our natural wealth might have been fine at one time, but in today's world it is not. If we are to choose between the status quo and the way things could be, I choose ambition. The future of our province is in all of our hands, like the financial planner answering the question, "Can I afford to invest?" with "Can you afford not to?"

Can we afford to plan 20 years out? Mr. Speaker, can we afford not to? Did Ireland go from a thousand years as the poor cousin of Europe to the wealthiest nation per capita on Earth by coasting? Has Singapore risen from a colonial backwater to a global centre by shying away from challenges? Has South Korea gone from an economy on a par with Afghanistan in 1960 – get that: South Korea

on a par with Afghanistan in 1960 – to one of the world’s industrial giants today without a clear sense of direction? Has Dubai gone from a dusty, desert fiefdom to the hottest financial and tourist centre in Asia by waiting for others to take the lead? Did Alberta get where it is today by resting on its laurels? If we do not move forward, we will be left in the dust.

Mr. Speaker, Jeanette and I were recently stuck in the San Francisco airport for a nine-hour layover. So we got off the plane, and in minutes we were on a rapid-rail transit to downtown. Thirty minutes and three bucks later we stepped off in Union Square in the heart of San Francisco. In that 30-minute trip I studied a tourist map of the bay area. There were two of the world’s great universities: Berkeley and Stanford. There was Silicon Valley. North were Sonoma and Napa Valley, east the Oakland coliseum, three major airports all interconnected, the downtown, the parks, the bridges, the public transit. These folks had taken all the pieces of a great city, a great region, and put them all together. No crystal balls, just some determined farsightedness had transformed all the separate pieces into one of the greatest North American planning triumphs. It’s not perfect, but it is impressive.

Alberta has many of the same pieces, but we have yet to put them together. We have the makings of some of the world’s great educational institutions: the U of A, the U of C, NAIT, SAIT, and others, but we’re not there yet. We don’t have Napa and Sonoma, but we do have Banff and Jasper. We don’t have Silicon Valley, but remember that little more than a generation ago neither did they. If the world is changing and we are prepared to adapt, maybe we can be home to some future Silicon Valley equivalent. I’m talking here, Mr. Speaker, about creativity and foresight in every facet of inspired planning.

If we don’t figure out where the world is headed in 20 years, we can forget about San Francisco. We’re going to look more like Detroit. Remember that the world we’re building today, in 20 years we hand it fully over to our kids. What will that world look like? What will Alberta look like? What will be the legacy we leave our children: our kids, mine, yours? Is right now, Mr. Speaker, really the best we can do? Is it really? We have to find a way to sustain our way of life, and to do that, we have to dream, we have to plan, we have to act, we have to manage, we have to be wise, and we have to pay ourselves first. We have to be innovative and determined.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, our office in the Legislature Annex received 20 unsolicited letters from a grade 5 class at Keheewin school in Edmonton. Each student wrote of their own concerns about climate change and global warming. One wrote: even though I’m just a kid, please take my letter seriously. Another wrote: “What can I do about this? Well, not much. But if we band together, we can do a lot more than you or me or anyone else ever imagined.”

I was struck by the emotion and conviction these kids conveyed and also by the truth of a very simple message. Together we can do amazing things. Together we can make a difference, just like Kyla and Connor and Devon and their entire class are telling us. They are why we have to act and act immediately and act decisively. Our children are asking us to save their future so that they can enjoy our beautiful lands and drink clean water and breathe the fresh air when they grow up. What better reason do we have?

The Alberta Liberals believe that this is our mission, our most important mission. We have the vision and the will to make it happen, to bring a new kind of government to this province. So to the grade 5 class at Keheewin school and to all Albertans we say to you: message received loud and clear.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) there’s provision for five minutes for brief questions or comments.

Seeing none, I recognize the hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I express my appreciation to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for – I don’t know if it was by design – tailoring his speech at least to allow me my time before we have to adjourn. I appreciate that. I know that I’m always on his mind.

I would like to begin by saying that I always enjoy hearing from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and I would like to congratulate the Premier on his first Speech from the Throne. On behalf of Alberta’s NDP opposition I have the pleasure of sharing our speech from the throne for working families with you today. As Alberta’s Legislative Assembly commences its new session, we have a clear message for the government and for Albertans. Alberta is currently experiencing unprecedented economic growth. Unfortunately, the Tory government’s lack of planning has left many Albertans behind. The Alberta NDP has a plan that will protect and enhance the services that working and middle-class families count on. We will be their champion for their concerns.

Alberta’s NDP will stand up for working and middle-class families. Alberta is currently experiencing unprecedented economic growth. A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that with the exception of the very wealthy most Albertans are working harder than they were a generation ago, yet they are not getting the benefits of increased real incomes. On the contrary, Albertans are feeling the pressures of increased housing and utility costs. Many find themselves paying more for services if they can get the services at all. The businesses that are hardest hit by our current labour pressures are the small businesses, that are the cornerstone of our economy.

Alberta families need someone to be their champion. They need a government that knows what they’re up against and that will take action to make their lives easier. Alberta’s NDP caucus has a plan that puts working and middle-class families first. This is our speech from the throne, written with them and their families in mind. An NDP government will stand up for Alberta families by ensuring that they can access the high-quality services that they depend on.

5:10

The NDP opposition helped lead the fight against the Tory government’s third-way health care privatization plan. We will continue to champion public health care so that it’s there when Albertans need it. An NDP government will implement reforms that strengthen our public health care system. For example, our proposed legislation to bulk-buy drugs would save \$50 million per year by providing cheaper pharmaceuticals for Alberta families. An NDP government will continue to bring reforms to reduce wait times. We will step up efforts to train and attract more health professionals, including more family physicians.

The Conservative government has failed to ensure that class sizes are appropriate for the best possible learning. An NDP government will give schools and teachers the tools they need to provide the best learning environment for Alberta’s children. With tuition fees and rents on the rise many families are struggling to pay for postsecondary education. An NDP government will make tuition and associated education costs affordable for all Albertans.

Many Alberta families are struggling to find the care their aging parents need. There aren’t enough spaces in long-term care facilities, and often these facilities do not meet basic standards. The Tory government has failed to implement the Auditor General’s

recommendations for improving the standards for long-term care in Alberta. An NDP government will ensure that seniors who helped build this province have safe and comfortable accommodation. We will treat our seniors with the dignity and respect they deserve.

An NDP government will give tangible support to municipalities to provide safe streets. Community policing and crime reduction strategies are effective ways to make our communities safer. Alberta needs a provincial crime reduction strategy, which includes funding for 500 new community police officers across Alberta. We will support programs for young people dealing with addictions and to help at-risk youth get off the street. An NDP government would give municipalities the tools they need to foster their communities, particularly stable and predictable long-term funding. Housing, policing, and transit will be urban priorities for an NDP government.

A severe shortage of housing has led to soaring rents, large hikes in the cost of houses, and an increase in homelessness. The Tory government's failure to plan is hurting Albertans. While the government has established a task force on housing, it is too early to tell what its recommendations will be or whether they will be accepted. An NDP government will establish a ministry of housing, which will co-ordinate initiatives such as affordable housing programs, rent review legislation, and land banking for Alberta municipalities. Homelessness in a province as wealthy as Alberta is unacceptable. An NDP government will not rest until it is eliminated.

An NDP government will renegotiate an agreement with the federal government to ensure that employers must first demonstrate that there are no qualified Albertan or Canadian workers available before receiving approval to bring in temporary foreign workers. Employers will be expected to work constructively with legitimate trade unions and the Alberta government to ensure that the labour needs of industry are met and that Albertan and Canadian workers are given priority for employment. The NDP caucus supports initiatives to support skills training and labour force development for aboriginal and Métis Albertans. We will strengthen the role of legitimate building trades unions in the training and indenturing of apprentices.

Alberta is experiencing a severe infrastructure crisis. In order to pay off the provincial debt, the Tory government has systematically underfunded provincial infrastructure. The result is that we now have a massive infrastructure debt of between \$10 billion and \$20 billion. The first step for an NDP government in addressing our infrastructure debt will be to develop a complete and honest accounting of the current infrastructure debt facing the government, school boards, hospitals, postsecondary institutions, and municipalities. We will then develop a multi-billion-dollar capital plan to systematically update Alberta's infrastructure over the next 10 years.

Projects will be funded on a pay-as-you-go basis, supplemented by low-interest financing. This honest and transparent approach is in direct contrast to the Tory government's plans to utilize P3s to build needed infrastructure projects. Under the government's plan private business would build and own many of our hospitals, roads, and schools. They would borrow money to do it and at a higher interest rate than the government. All costs plus a profit would be recovered from the taxpayers, yet the financial debt would appear on corporate, not government, books. P3s are simply a way of hiding public debt while increasing it at the same time. P3s have a long history of cost overruns, substandard quality, and unwieldy long-term contracts. An NDP government will reject this approach.

Global climate change threatens human civilization itself. The Conservative government seems unable to come to grips with its own responsibility in this matter. Uncontrolled and unplanned expansion of tar sands development not only disrupts the economy;

it will soon become the source of the largest increase in CO₂ emissions in the world. The Tory government's use of emissions intensity targets is deliberately misleading. It allows total emissions of CO₂ to continue to rise dramatically while their so-called intensity drops. We will oppose government legislation to further entrench emission intensity as the basis for Alberta's climate change strategy. An NDP government will work with industry to develop guidelines for real and meaningful limits on CO₂ emissions.

We will implement a temporary moratorium on the approval of new tar sands projects while a long-term economic and environmental strategy for the development of the tar sands is developed. This will include a plan for impacts on water and natural gas supplies, the labour market, and the environment. An NDP government will pursue a balanced approach to reducing emissions. We have already introduced legislation designed to help individual Albertans do their share. These include our 2006 bill to allow net metering of electricity and our 2005 bill to create a revolving fund to promote energy efficiency retrofits.

Alberta faces a looming water crisis. The Tory government has failed to fully fund the Water for Life strategy. Meanwhile, water licences are overallocated, population growth is outstripping our supplies of water, and the ever-growing thirst of the petroleum industry jeopardizes the long-term availability of clean water. An NDP government will make water supply and water quality a top priority.

Albertans are not getting their fair share as the owners of our precious nonrenewable resources. The energy corporations exploiting these resources are reaping the benefits of the unprecedented price of oil and the Conservative government's cut-rate royalties. Most tar sands projects still pay only 1 per cent royalty on the oil they produce. An NDP government will develop a royalty regime that is fair to Albertans, encourages the sustainable development of oil and gas resources, and ensures that bitumen will be processed here in Alberta. While recent surpluses seem large, they are small in comparison to the real value of our nonrenewable resources. We need to invest significantly more to create a renewable energy economy to ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit a green and prosperous future. An NDP government will create a green energy fund to invest in energy conservation, research and development of renewable energy, and green energy projects.

Alberta's NDP is committed to a balanced budget. An NDP government would cancel the massive corporate tax cuts supported by the Conservatives and the Liberals. When corporations like EnCana are earning \$6 billion in profits in one year, they do not need tax cuts. If corporations pay their fair share, working- and middle-class families have a chance to get ahead.

Sound land-use planning becomes critically important during periods of rapid growth. The government has a responsibility in ensuring that clear and distinct roles are set out for urban and rural municipalities. An NDP government will move to limit urban sprawl by restoring meaningful regional planning. Preservation of agricultural land and rural lifestyles will be important goals.

The government's flagship legislation is a bill to create a lobbyist registry. Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador all have such registries already, and the NDP opposition has been advocating this for a number of years. The Tory government has failed to include cooling-off periods in their legislation for former government officials entering the private sector. The Conservative government has repeatedly used Alberta's freedom of information legislation to justify hiding public information. In the last session of the Legislative Assembly the Tory government pushed through legislation that would restrict access to ministers' briefing notes and lock up internal audits for 15 years. An NDP

government will conduct an open and comprehensive review of Alberta's information laws.

5:20

The NDP opposition has proposed legislation that would create a commission on electoral reform, introduced private members' motions that would end the use of the Public Affairs Bureau as a Conservative government propaganda machine, and brought forward emergency motions to require disclosure of leadership campaign donations. True democratic reform should begin with legislation to get big money out of politics. An NDP government will eliminate corporate and union political donations and ensure that leadership contests for political parties are subject to the same limits and disclosure requirements as other political fundraising.

Alberta is at a crossroads. We can continue down the same path of uncontrolled growth, polluted air, and crumbling schools, or we

can take another path. As a province we have an unprecedented opportunity to create a green and prosperous future. We can ensure healthy families living in healthy communities, and by working together, we can build an open and inclusive democracy. We hope that Albertans will join us.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Again, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions or comments.

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 12.

[Motion carried; at 5:21 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

