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The 28th Legislature
First Session

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The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
Official Opposition Whip
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Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
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Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
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Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
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Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
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Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Fraser, Hon. Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)
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Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),
Premier
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Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (Ind)
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Leader of the Official Opposition
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),
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VanderBurg, Hon. George, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (PC)
Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),
Government Whip

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 59 Wildrose: 17 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 2

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		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Amery
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Bhardwaj	Olesen
Cao	Pastoor
Donovan	Quadri
Dorward	Rogers
Eggen	Rowe
Hehr	Sarich
Luan	Strankman
McDonald	Xiao

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Khan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Anderson
Casey
Dorward
Eggen
Kubinec
Sandhu
Sherman

Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Rogers
Deputy Chair: Mr. Quadri

Blakeman	Leskiw
Eggen	McDonald
Goudreau	Saskiw
Lemke	

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Chair: Vacant
Deputy Chair: Mr. Luan

Blakeman	Notley
Dorward	Saskiw
Fenske	Wilson
Johnson, L.	Young
McDonald	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Mr. Quest
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Brown	Jeneroux
Cusanelli	Leskiw
DeLong	Notley
Fraser	Pedersen
Fritz	Swann
Goudreau	Towle
Jablonski	Wilson
Jansen	Young

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman	Leskiw
Blakeman	Quadri
Brown	Rogers
DeLong	Wilson
Eggen	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Rogers

Casey	Mason
Forsyth	McDonald
Fraser	Quest
Kennedy-Glans	Sherman
Glans	Smith

Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Bhardwaj	Leskiw
Brown	Notley
Cusanelli	Olesen
DeLong	Rowe
Fox	Strankman
Fritz	Swann
Goudreau	Webber

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Calahasen	McAllister
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Hehr	Rogers
Jansen	Sandhu
Kennedy-Glans	Saskiw
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Luan	Young

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Anderson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

Amery	Jeneroux
Anglin	Khan
Bilous	Pastoor
Donovan	Quadri
Fenske	Quest
Goudreau	Sarich
Hale	Stier
Hehr	Vacant

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Anglin

Barnes	Johnson, L.
Bikman	Khan
Bilous	Kubinec
Blakeman	Lemke
Calahasen	Sandhu
Casey	Stier
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Hale	Vacant

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 28, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, welcome back.

Let us pray. Holy Creator, as we begin the fourth sitting of the First Session of the 28th Legislature, we thank You for guiding us safely back to the sanctity of this Chamber. We also pray for Your guidance in fulfilling our duties for the enduring benefit of all Albertans. Let us be reminded that we have all pledged to faithfully serve the citizens we humbly represent and to do it to the best of our abilities and that we have also pledged to do it in a manner respectful to each other and to those whom we serve. Amen.

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

Mr. Edwin Albert Oman

August 31, 1930, to September 19, 2013

The Speaker: Mr. Ed Oman served this Assembly as the Member for Calgary-North Hill for two terms from 1979 to 1986. He served on many boards and committees during his career, including the Calgary Police Commission, the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede Board, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. He was also involved in various Calgary Olympic initiatives. Mr. Oman earned a master of divinity degree and subsequently served as minister of the covenant church for 17 years. For 13 of those years he was also director of the church choir. His long public service as a pastor, Calgary city alderman, and MLA demonstrated his commitment to making the world a better place.

Unfortunately we were unable to confirm the attendance today of anyone from Mr. Oman's family. However, our condolences and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this time.

Mr. Richard Arthur Miller

July 23, 1960, to October 26, 2013

The Speaker: It is also with sadness that I inform you that this past Saturday Mr. Rick Miller passed away after a long illness. Mr. Miller served as the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford from 2004 until 2008. He was very passionate about representing his constituency and worked hard to ensure that he was available for all Albertans. He was an active volunteer and worked in a long-established family business. He was a sports enthusiast but really excelled as a master-rated hang glider. His personable character made him a very popular choice amongst his colleagues here in the Legislature as well as outside.

An additional tribute will be offered for Mr. Miller on November 4, 2013, at the request of his family since none of them were available to attend today given that they are at their heaviest time of bereavement with the sudden passing of Mr. Miller on Saturday past.

Mr. Paul Joseph Lorieau

June 29, 1942, to July 2, 2013

The Speaker: In addition, I wish to acknowledge the passing of another important person who graced our Assembly with his

presence on a regular basis every Monday or every start-up day, as the case may have required. Mr. Paul Joseph Lorieau, who led this Assembly in the singing of *O Canada*, passed away on July 2, 2013, at the age of 71. Born in Legal, Alberta, he established a successful optical business on the University of Alberta campus. He was best known for his stirring renditions of the national anthems at Edmonton Oilers hockey games, where he first sang the national anthem to the crowd 30 years ago, and then in this Chamber only 15 years ago, on January 27, 1998. From February 2000 until May of this year Mr. Lorieau began our sitting with a very inspirational rendition of *O Canada*. He instilled great patriotic pride in our Assembly, and his powerful tenor voice reminded all members of the reason we serve in this Assembly, to make this country and this province the best place we possibly can. As you know, he sang his last *O Canada* at the all-party MLA hockey game in Leduc just a few short months ago and joined us also for the Speaker's Cup.

I had the great privilege of knowing him then and of remembering him now along with his family members who are in the gallery. They are standing now: Danielle Lorieau-Peruch, daughter; Ilyan Peruch, son-in-law; Matteo Lorieau-Peruch, nine-year-old grandson; Alexa Lorieau-Peruch, seven-year-old granddaughter; Camille Lorieau, daughter; Jocelyne Lorieau, daughter; Mark Georgetti, eight-year-old grandson; Lisa Lorieau, daughter; Daniel Ferguson, son-in-law; Alyssa Anne Knoop, granddaughter; Brianna Marie Knoop, granddaughter.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, in a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Oman, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Lorieau as you may have known them. And as you reflect on this special gift that Mr. Lorieau gave – and it's addressed and personally autographed to all members of this Assembly – please reflect deeply.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them forever. Amen.

Please remain standing for the singing of *O Canada*, led by our very own Colleen Vogel, a member of our Legislative Assembly staff.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. members. Thank you, Ms Vogel.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta Grand Chief Richard Kappo, who is seated in your gallery. Grand Chief Kappo was first elected as chief of Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation in 2004 and was named grand chief of Treaty 8 this summer. I can tell you that Grand Chief Kappo has been a very strong advocate of not only Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation but all Treaty 8 First Nations in Alberta. I've spent many

days in Treaty 8 territory and last month, Mr. Speaker, visited Tallcree, Little Red River, and Little Buffalo. Today in the House I'm honoured to be wearing moccasins that were given to me by an elder from Beaver Lake First Nation. I look forward to our continued work and dialogue together with Grand Chief Kappo and all Treaty 8 First Nations. I'd ask that Grand Chief Richard Kappo rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40 Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a large number of guest groups and individuals to be introduced. Please keep your introductions as brief as possible. Let us begin with school groups.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two groups of students above us and behind me. Seated in the gallery are 30 grade 5/6 students along with their teacher, Don Douglas, and assistants from Waverley school in Kenilworth, who just completed a tour of the Legislature Building. Also above us in the members' gallery are 35 grade 6 students from my alma mater, Avonmore elementary school, accompanied by their teacher, May Louise Moskuwicz, and assistants who are here today and all week at the School at the Legislature. If both of these groups could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly roughly 50 grade 9 students from George McDougall high school in Airdrie, a school that I attended back when it was still a junior high, in the early 1990s. I'd like their teachers and parent assistants to stand as their names are called: my good friend Mr. Scott Sharun, Mr. Erick Fisk, Mrs. Linda Stadnyk, and Mrs. Kathy Ritcher. If all of the students could please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?

If not, let us move on, then, to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an individual whose leadership has been instrumental in our response to the southern Alberta floods. Mr. Colin Lloyd is the managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Colin has been at my side from the very first day of the floods and every day since, providing advice and guidance as we visited the flood-affected areas to ensure that we made decisions that would benefit Albertans in the near term and in the long term. He's here on behalf of his team, that is still working very hard at this very moment helping Albertans get back on their feet and rebuild their homes and their lives. He's also here to represent the public service, some very dedicated members that worked around the clock and continue to do so to assist flood victims and help in our recovery efforts. I'd ask Mr. Colin Lloyd to rise on behalf of himself and all of them to receive the warm welcome and thank you of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group from the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, Mary Lynne Campbell and Patty Ditrack. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask the guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three laboratory technologists: Joan Card, Shawna Gawreluck, and Annette Tennison. I met with these three front-line health professionals the other day to discuss the risks of privatizing laboratory testing. The experience of previous privatization of Alberta labs in the mid-90s compromised openness and accountability and efficiency of lab testing; thus, at times putting patient safety at risk. I would like to thank them for their service to Albertans each and every day. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you my guests, who are members of the Kids Not Cuts coalition. Kids Not Cuts is a province-wide coalition of support staff working in our K to 12 education system. They represent staffing positions such as library technicians, special-needs teaching assistants, aboriginal liaison workers, facility operators, educational assistants, and custodians. Members of the coalition who are here today include Mike Scott, Don Boucher, Jody Carey, Gloria Lepine, Carol Chapman, Leanne LaRocque, Lee-Ann Kalen, Rick Klimchuk, Wilma Ellenburgh, Patricia Paulsen, Ishani Weera, Olav Rokne, and Ruth Shymka. They're here because they're extremely concerned about what is happening in our educational system as a result of last year's spring budgets. Please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back, everyone. It's indeed my honour and pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly a very dear friend who is visiting me from London, England, Andrea Lestar. I would ask her to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, your guests will be here after 2 p.m., I am told. We'll address them then.

Mr. Cao: They are here, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: They are here now? Please proceed, Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two distinguished gentlemen from our Calgary-Fort constituency, Bob Gray and Gary Vegelis. Bob is president of our Calgary-Fort PC Association and senator of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary. Formerly, Bob was also an RCMP officer, vice-president of Dominion Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, and a manager with the city of Calgary. Gary is the vice-president of our Calgary-Fort PC Association and a former board member of the Alberta Construction Safety Association. Both of these gentlemen have contributed greatly to the constituency in many ways and

brighten our lives with their wonderful humour. It's thanks to the leadership of these two gentlemen and the friendship of these two persons that I have had the privilege of serving the constituency in five elections so far.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature the newly elected leader of the Alberta Party, Greg Clark. Greg is deeply involved in his community and serves on numerous boards and committees both locally and provincially. I would also like to introduce to you Greg's assistant, Evan Galbraith. I ask you both to please rise now and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation.

Mr. Scott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you two very good friends of mine, Sharon and Peter Clarkson, former residents of Fort McMurray. Sharon is a very active community member. She was a school board trustee and a municipal councillor. Peter is a very active volunteer, and he's an amateur sports coach. Peter and Sharon are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd like them to rise and for all members to give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Guy Smith, the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. The AUPE represents over 80,000 workers in Alberta, and their members have been on the front lines of this government's broken promises for better health care, for supports for the vulnerable in places like Michener Centre, and for stable, predictable funding for our schools and our universities. I would ask that Mr. Smith rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we still have three more introductions to do, and we'll have to hold that for a moment because the clock dictates that we shall start Oral Question Period momentarily.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given it's the first day back, I wonder if I might ask for unanimous consent of the House to extend the Routine to continue introductions and Ministerial Statements and then to extend past 3 p.m. so that we can complete the Routine.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the request is in order. It requires unanimous consent, in which case we would finish off three more introductions briefly and proceed on with Ministerial Statements.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hearing no objections, let us continue, then, with the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View with your introduction.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'm happy to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly – and I would like to ask them to rise as I introduce them – four students at the University of Alberta. They are Michael Stuart, Mark Jacka, Jeremy Gray, and Ross Hamilton. While working toward their various degrees, they're also taking the time to get involved in politics and the issues that matter to Albertans. They are members of the Wildrose campus club at the U of A. I know that regardless of our political stripes in here, we'll be thrilled to see young people taking the initiative to get involved in things that matter to Albertans. I would ask you all to join me in giving them the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Agnieszka Frankiw and Keith Banner. Agnieszka is a laboratory technologist in Edmonton; Keith Banner a concerned citizen. Both want to see the province avoid a repeat of the costly and destructive privatization of health care laboratory services in Edmonton. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, your guests are not here yet? Thank you.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Flood in Southern Alberta

Ms Redford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we begin the fall session today, it's my privilege to rise to update Albertans on the work that their government is doing to help communities recover and rebuild. Only four months ago Alberta endured the worst natural disaster to ever hit our province. Tens of thousands of Albertans in dozens of communities were deeply affected, including four people who lost their lives. Critical pieces of public infrastructure, including hospitals, bridges, schools, highways, and roads, were damaged, and thousands of homes and businesses were damaged or completely destroyed.

But if anything matched the fury of the waters, it was the courage and the compassion of Albertans themselves. The people of this province responded in an incredible fashion by opening their homes, their hearts, and their wallets to each other: friends, neighbours, and strangers, Mr. Speaker. They showed the world what Albertans are made of. In the face of flood waters they were resilient.

Within the first hours of the rainfall we mobilized the government's full capabilities to help, and I'm tremendously proud of how fast we were able to move in getting assistance to those in need. Within four days of the flood we allocated \$1 million in relief funding. Nearly \$170 million in preliminary assistance has gone to municipalities and to First Nations to allow them to begin rebuilding. Seventy million dollars in immediate aid went to over 40,000 people forced from their homes, and we are providing temporary housing to 1,300 Albertans who can't yet return.

Almost a thousand kilometres of provincial roads were washed out or damaged. Fully 87 per cent have been reopened, Mr. Speaker. All health facilities and services displaced by the flooding have been restored. While more than 80 schools were shut down, all but three opened their doors in time to start the

school year. Schools matter to families. Temporary classrooms are in place, and they're in the process of opening for the 950 students at those three schools. Our government has also opened dedicated disaster recovery offices in southern Alberta, helping victims to get their claims processed quickly so that they can make decisions, have information, and rebuild.

We've held dozens of information sessions in flood-stricken neighbourhoods so that Albertans can understand what they're eligible for, and government employees have been going door to door to make sure that people are aware of the supports that are available. Total costs arising from the floods, including those to insurance and the government, will be more than \$6 billion. The federal government is working closely with us, and Ottawa will be covering some of those disaster recovery expenses with us.

I know that there are families that are making decisions about their future. I know that not everyone is through the disaster recovery application process, but our government is moving as fast as we possibly can on the biggest disaster recovery program that Alberta has ever seen. We will continue to be there for families and for communities, as I've said from day one, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to be responsible to taxpayers to make sure that the dollars that we do spend are being spent properly.

We're working hard to prepare for the next disaster by developing layers of readiness that are focused on people, the environment, reconstruction, and the economy, and we will introduce legislation in this sitting to ensure that Albertans and our communities are safer than ever from floods. Additionally, we expect to announce major erosion control programs on vulnerable rivers. We've hired two engineering firms to assess proposals for flood mitigation and to identify the best options. When we get the answers we need, we will be acting.

Protecting Albertans is our highest priority, and the lessons that we learned from the floods will ensure that we're able to help Albertans keep their property and their homes safe. Healing will take years. Much work remains. Our government will be there with communities and with families every step of the way. Physical rebuilding, health rebuilding, a commitment to mental health response: that's what matters to us because it matters to Albertans.

I want to make it clear that our leadership for this recovery effort will not deter us from building and rebuilding Alberta for every Albertan. We will meet the challenges that come from explosive growth head-on, from infrastructure investment to market access to growing our savings for the future. We've created a building Alberta plan that will address these challenges, and we will meet that plan, Mr. Speaker. Quite simply, Albertans' quality of life demands nothing less. [applause]

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Premier, for that statement. There is no doubt that serious questions remain about how the flood response was handled and what we can do better in the future, but now is not the time for that. Now is a time for recognition and a time for mourning, a time to recognize the incredible efforts that we witnessed from first responders, public servants, service groups, and volunteers. In the immediate aftermath of the floods we saw true heroism unfold in how police, fire, and paramedic services got Albertans out of harm's way.

In the days and weeks that followed, Alberta's true character shone brighter than ever before. The Mission Possible teams deployed thousands of volunteers into our neighbourhoods,

including 16,000 into High River alone, mucking out basements and helping families clean up. Local officials worked tirelessly to rebuild roads, sewage canals, and stormwater areas; Mormon Helping Hands with 8,500 volunteers; Samaritan's Purse with thousands more; Siksika pet rescuers; little girls selling lemonade on their front lawns to raise money to give to Red Cross.

I'd also like to recognize the Red Cross for their work giving comfort at the evacuation centres, and I'd like to thank Human Services ministry staff for giving compassionate and timely support to flood victims when they needed it most. Alberta stepped up in a way we had never seen, each example affirming to the rest of the country and the rest of the world the excellence of our people and the resiliency of our spirit.

But it's also a time to mourn. Five Albertans lost their lives in the June floods. Let me tell you about three of them. Jacqui Brocklebank was 33. She had cerebral palsy and died after taking a cab to a friend's house to warn her about the flood. That was just down the street from my house. Amber Rancourt was 35. She died after being swept away by rushing flood waters while her husband attempted to get their horse to safety. Rob Nelson was 42. He died from injuries sustained when his ATV rolled over while he was checking his neighbours' homes for flood damage. Two others, an 83-year-old woman and a 52-year-old man, also died. While we celebrate the tales of bravery and heroism and while we embark on a rebuilding process that will take years, let us never forget those who perished and the broken family members and loved ones that they left behind.

While devastating and tragic, I believe that the 2013 floods will ultimately be remembered as a moment in time where Albertans showed the world who we are. We are compassionate, we are courageous, and we are confident that our best days, despite this terrible tragedy, are still ahead.

Thank you.

2:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm going to anticipate that the House leader from the Liberal side wishes to seek unanimous consent for their caucus to provide a brief statement. Am I anticipating correctly?

Ms Blakeman: You indeed are.

The Speaker: I expect the same is being motioned my way by the leader of the New Democratic opposition.

So let me ask one question, unanimous consent being required. Does anyone object to allowing comments to be made on this important subject from the Liberal caucus and from the New Democratic caucus? If so, please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hearing no objection, let us proceed, with the Liberal caucus starting. The hon. leader.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to respond to the Premier. We had one of the most devastating disasters in this country's history, and the true character of the people of this province and the people of this country shone through as neighbour helped neighbour in need. It took everyone's effort in this province to get through this very difficult time, and I was amazed at how that parade in Calgary went on. When the going got tough, Albertans got going.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start by doing something that doesn't happen often enough in the House. I'm going to give the government credit for doing a good job. The government's

emergency response in the immediate aftermath of the flood was very good. I'm happy to give the government credit for that. The emergency plan was solid and executed well, and Albertans got back to their lives regularly. Please, everyone, give the government credit for this.

Mr. Speaker, one reason it's so rare for opposition leaders and MLAs to give the government credit for doing a good job is because it doesn't happen nearly enough in this province. Too often the government falls down on the job and fails Albertans, and a prime example of this comes in the area of flood mitigation. The flood in June wasn't the first disaster of its kind in Alberta. We all remember the devastating floods of 2005, and certainly there have been other floods in the province's history. Given this, one might think the government would have taken steps to mitigate future flooding after 2005, but of course we know they did not. This government completely failed in its duty to protect the province from future flooding, even leaving millions and millions of federal dollars on the table.

While the initial response to the flood was excellent, I can't help but think that the damage caused by the flood was worse than it needed to be. Given this government's record when it comes to broken promises, secret dealings, and mismanagement, I have serious concerns about what we will see moving forward when it comes to the vital work of flood recovery and reconstruction. I look forward to working with the government to get this done right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of myself and the entire NDP caucus I offer my sincere condolences to all of those affected by June's flooding. In the immediate days following the flooding, Albertans came together to help one another alongside our hard-working first responders and service providers. It was inspiring for all Albertans and especially comforting for those in southern Alberta, and we commend all of those hard-working Albertans for their generosity of spirit and outstanding, ongoing efforts. I am so impressed and so proud to be an Albertan. I witnessed the very same spirit after the Slave Lake fire, and I know that Albertans in times of need do come together and help.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the planning to mitigate the flood damage fell short. The government ignored its own report following the 2006 floods, and they did not apply for federal funding for flood mitigation. It isn't fair to ask Albertans to pay for the negligence of this government; nevertheless, Albertans are on the hook for billions of dollars. When I was in High River, I met small-business owners who had lost their life's work and renters with nowhere to go.

We must do better to make sure that our response now and our planning for the future take these people into account. Albertans need a comprehensive strategy to help them plan for their homes, families, and businesses in the event of other disasters. The NDP opposition will give its support for government measures to accomplish this goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statement by the Speaker

Oral Question Period and Members' Statements Speaker Rotation

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed with the Routine and question period, I would like to make a brief statement about

the rotation of oral questions and members' statements. This statement is further to my recent memorandum dated and sent to each of you on October 18 of this year, which included the projected sitting days calendar for the fall sitting.

As you are all well aware, there have been changes to caucus membership over the last number of months, and the Member for Edmonton-Manning and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo are both now sitting as independent members. Although the first change occurred on May 14, when the Assembly was in fact sitting, this was only one day prior to the House concluding the spring sitting, so there was little or no opportunity to make a statement regarding the rotation at that time.

At the outset, however, I would like to point out to all members that the change in caucus membership will not alter the rotation of questions for today or tomorrow, which, as indicated on the calendar, are so-called days 2 and 3 of the rotation sequence.

In reviewing the rotation for question period, I noted that the current House standings are somewhat similar to those that existed in both February 2011 and February 2012, where there was one independent member and one member of the Alberta Party. It is my view that the current rotation should parallel these circumstances, which would result in each independent member having one question every four days. Accordingly, the Member for Edmonton-Manning will be entitled to a question this Wednesday, should he wish to take it, since that will be day 4, and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo will be entitled to a question this coming Thursday, should he wish to take it, since that will be day 1.

In other words, given that today is day 2 in the rotation, this means that one independent member will have a question on day 4 and the second independent member will have a question on day 1, which follows day 4. As was the case in 2011 and 2012, the independent members will be entitled to the sixth question slot on each of these days, a slot which occurs after all four caucuses have had the opportunity to ask at least one question during slots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

With respect to the rotation for members' statements, this has also been modified to provide for one statement for each independent member every two weeks. This was reflected on the projected sitting days calendar that I sent you last week.

Hon. members, we're off to a very good start with some wonderful statements. Let's see if we can continue on that high level and that high plane.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. member, question period has been called. Did you have some urgent matter?

Ms Blakeman: I did, but I guess you didn't see me before question period was called. I'll just send it in written form for you.

The Speaker: Okay. Let us proceed with the hon. Leader of her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Health Care Wait Times

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, today the Fraser Institute issued its latest report on health care wait times across Canada. Despite spending more than \$17 billion, the total time a patient waits for health care is now at an all-time high in Alberta. From the time their family doctor recommends treatment to when they actually get a procedure, Albertans have never waited longer. It is a scathing indictment of the government and its failure to put patients first.

To the Premier: when will her government start providing timely access to health care for Albertans?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of the work that our Health minister has done this summer with respect to managing health care. This is a minister who has secured a seven-year deal for sustainable health care spending with doctors, he's lowered the cost of generic drugs so that Albertans can get access to medication, and he's driven the need for change at Alberta Health Services, bringing our vice-presidents from 75 down to 10. We will continue to ensure that we are providing effective health care for Albertans in a timely fashion, the best health care in the country.

Ms Smith: Maybe the Premier didn't hear the question. Waits have never been longer, and the fact remains that far too many Albertans are waiting far too long for health care. According to the report, over the past three years this government has made no progress on cutting wait times for how long it takes patients to get in to see a specialist. In fact, last year alone this one measure increased 24 per cent. To the Premier: when will her government give Albertans timely access to the health care they need when they need it?

2:10

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, our government uses the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the nationally recognized measurement body for health care system performance in this country, to analyze our own wait times and to benchmark ourselves against others. I'm not sure where the hon. member is getting her information, but I'm very happy to tell the House that we've achieved a 9 per cent reduction in hip surgery wait times, a 16 per cent reduction in knee replacement wait times, 22 per cent lower wait times in cataract surgery, 10 per cent in bypass, and as of last week we've taken the waiting time for cornea transplants in this province from three years to three months.

Ms Smith: I'll table the report, Mr. Speaker, but they're not even meeting their own wait time targets. Our Wildrose wait time guarantee offers an affordable and practical approach to cut wait times across the board within a publicly funded health care system, and it would do so by increasing the number of patients who can access the out-of-province fund. [interjections] Will the Premier commit today to showing that she cares about the long delays faced by Alberta patients and implement our wait time guarantee?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that the Official Opposition would present itself as a government whose answer to reducing wait times in our vastly growing province is to export health care to other jurisdictions. [interjections] That's not what this government stands for. This government recognizes that we are the province with the best funded public health care system in the country. In fact, we exceed many developed countries in terms of our per capita funding. We have measurable success in many areas, and we continue to deliver quality health care and to support front-line workers in their efforts to reduce wait times.

The Speaker: No interjections, please. That's the only warning I'll give.

The hon. Member for Highwood, Leader of the Official Opposition.

Flood Recovery Contracts

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we're going to have a lot of questions about the flood for the Premier over the next several weeks, and I have three to start with that have had the most impact on those dealing with the flood. Hundreds of students are waiting for portables because the government awarded a sole source \$19 million contract to a company called Enzo Developments and they haven't met a single one of their deadlines to deliver. How is it that a company that has never built school portables was handed this contract, and is the Premier happy with their performance?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said in my statement earlier, there are some incredible challenges that we face as a province, and I think all leaders in this House stood up and talked about the fact that we had to make and did make exceptional decisions to ensure that we could enhance people's quality of life and give them certainty. I want to congratulate our Minister of Education for the hard work that he and his department did over the summer. As we said, there were over 80 schools that were impacted, and only three didn't open, because we took bold decisions. So I congratulate the minister on that. I'm pleased to know that students will be getting back into schools tomorrow in High River, and that's good news.

Ms Smith: I can see the Premier doesn't want to defend that contract, so how about this one? The government awarded another, larger \$45 million sole source contract to a company called Tervita to help the town clean up flooded public areas but also to do some work on High River homes. In the process dozens of other companies that could have also helped speed up the recovery process were shut out of the work. Can the Premier tell us: how is it that Tervita was selected to do this work alone, and is she happy with their performance?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, in the first few weeks of the disaster we knew we had to make a lot of very immediate decisions, and we dealt with the situation as best we could. Some of the decisions were based on limited information, but we tried to make sure that we made quick decisions and that we had companies in place to help with clean up and such like that. Tervita demonstrated in our quick analysis the most capacity, the best background. It was very evident, clearly, at the Calgary Stampede the incredible work that they did to clean that up in such short order, and that's why they were awarded the contract.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think we're seeing a pattern here. This government has also awarded a sole source contract for the administration of disaster recovery payouts to a company called LandLink. This contract has itself been a disaster. KPMG found all sorts of deficiencies in their handling of the disaster recovery program for the 2010 Medicine Hat floods. Many of those victims still have not had their claims dealt with. Can the Premier tell us why LandLink still has this contract, or is she happy with their performance?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, LandLink has had that contract for 17 years. They've delivered some exceptional services to Albertans, and every time we find ourselves in a disaster where LandLink has provided those services, we do an evaluation so that we and LandLink and every other municipality can work on providing better services to the people that they serve. They continue to improve. But the point to note about every one of those contracts is that this was the most unprecedented disaster we have ever seen

and the largest in Canadian history. We're bound to make a couple of mistakes, but the fact that we have responded so quickly and so soundly to so many Albertans in 30 communities means that we've done an exceptional job.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it was refreshing to hear three good questions with three good answers without interjection. Thank you. Keep it up.

Let me move on. Third main set of questions. The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Provincial Debt

Ms Smith: In Medicine Hat earlier this month the Premier said this about debt: it's not debt; it's hope. So let's take some of the Premier's other quotes and sub in hope for debt to see if that sentence makes sense. First: Alberta does not have hope, and we will not incur hope. Then there's this: we cannot come out of the current fiscal situation with hope. And a PC campaign ad: Albertans want to know that we're not going to have hope. To the Premier: if debt is hope, when can we once again expect to be hope free?

Ms Redford: You know what, Mr. Speaker? There are incredibly important issues that we need to talk about in this House, and it's a shame that the opposition won't take them seriously. I stand by what I said. What we build in Alberta by putting in place infrastructure is schools and roads and health care facilities that matter to the quality of life for Albertans. We have a plan to build Alberta, to rebuild Alberta. We are committed to that, and that is what matters to Albertans, not this.

Ms Smith: The Premier saw it was so ridiculous. She has since changed her tune a bit, now saying, and I quote: we don't have debt in this province; we have infrastructure in this province. Well, Alberta was debt free for nearly 10 years, and in that time capital spending hit record levels. If debt is now infrastructure instead of hope, how does the Premier explain all those schools and hospitals and roads that were built when Alberta didn't have a penny of outstanding debt?

Ms Redford: You know, Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting year for Alberta. You will have heard that we are over 4 million people now. The one thing that Albertans told us in the last election was to keep building infrastructure. The opposition can go back to the days where they talk about infrastructure being built and no debt, but you know, we had an infrastructure deficit. We didn't have enough schools. We didn't have enough hospitals. We weren't investing in communities, and that's what we're doing today.

Ms Smith: While the Premier's team struggles to come up with new metaphors for debt, here are the cold, hard facts. We will have at least \$17 billion worth of debt by the time of the next election. At the current repayment rate it will take more than 80 years to pay back all of that debt, and in that time Albertans are going to have to pay \$25 billion in interest payments just to keep the creditors off our backs. Will the Premier stop the spin, look Albertans square in the eye, and just admit it? Debt is debt.

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see that nothing has changed in their policy on that basis. There are a number of other policies that have changed, but that one hasn't.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the sophistication of the financial analysis that's over there doesn't match any of the sophistication of the Albertans that I saw and talked to around this province in 14 open houses this year, where I asked them the question: should we be borrowing for the life of the assets for your school, for your hospital, and your road? The resounding answer: yes; build it.

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

2:20

Minister of Municipal Affairs

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver: all three have big-city charters which give them the autonomy and powers they need to meet their unique challenges. Meanwhile Edmonton and Calgary do not. Municipal elections have just been held, and I'm reminded of the fact that the Municipal Affairs minister has not met his commitment to get these charters done. To the Premier: are you satisfied with the fact that your minister has failed to keep this important promise?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, it was wonderful on Saturday morning in this building to sit down with Mayor Iveson and Mayor Nenshi to talk about the importance of building our cities. In fact, one of the things we talked about – I'm surprised the hon. member didn't see it in the news – is the fact that both mayors are very excited that we are very close to completing those charters. In fact, one of the things that Mayor Iveson asked for – and I just spoke to him today at the chamber of commerce – was some time to work with his new, young council to make sure that we're ready to proceed with the charters. We're very excited about that, and we're glad to have kept the commitment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: given that the minister called the mayor of Calgary a puffed-up peacock and dismissed millions of Edmontonians and Calgarians as latte-sipping condo dwellers, aren't you at least a little bit concerned that your Minister of Municipal Affairs doesn't seem to be very fond of the majority of Albertans that he's supposed to be helping?

Ms Redford: Wow, Mr. Speaker. I've got to tell you: I don't know where this member has been for the past six months, but I've seen a Minister of Municipal Affairs and emergency response who has demonstrated very clearly how much he cares about Albertans, and he has demonstrated that in Calgary, in High River, in Medicine Hat, in Fort McMurray, and also in a lot of areas that perhaps were not impacted by flood. We know that every single Albertan matters. We know that we can work with municipal councils and large cities to get this done, and we will.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, "wow" is what we said when he called them latte-sipping condo dwellers in the big cities and when he referred to the mayor of Calgary with those derogatory terms.

To the Premier: given that the mayor of Calgary has expressed a very low opinion of how your minister is handling big-city charters and given that columnists of the *Calgary Herald* have called for that same minister to be assigned a new portfolio, will you finally admit that he is not fit for the job?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's going to be a surprise to anyone in Alberta that the columnists at the *Calgary Herald* probably are not the people that I listen to for advice for this government. I listen to the people of Alberta, who 18 months ago elected this government to manage the important affairs of the province. I'll tell you that on Saturday morning, even well before I had the opportunity to sit down with both mayors, Mayor Nenshi and I travelled together at 6 o'clock in the morning from Calgary. We had a very good talk with respect to how we will work together, how mayors and the municipal government minister will work together, and it's going to be fine.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, the leader of the New Democrat opposition.

Flood Mitigation

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Tragically, after the floods this June, Albertans now know what it takes to get this PC government to act, a natural disaster that's projected to cost billions of dollars. They not only ignored the advice of their own report following the floods in 2006, but they didn't even bother to apply for millions in federal funding that would have covered some of the costs of flood mitigation. My question is to the Premier. Why not?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, it's a misnomer to suggest that we didn't follow the recommendations of the Groeneveld flood mitigation report. In fact, all of the recommendations were implemented or a majority followed except for two. We're going to be tabling legislation to deal with those. We spent \$82 million in the last few years, helping with mitigation. In fact, we have several communities that said that that investment that the province made in partnership with municipalities helped save their communities. The fact is that that program was opened up at the very last minute to other jurisdictions like Alberta, and we weren't prepared to meet the criteria of that program, but I just met with the federal minister in the last couple of months, and we're continuing to advocate for a national disaster mitigation program so that we can serve Alberta's communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. While there were short timelines involved in that getting that money, Alberta was the only one that didn't get it.

This government's own report on the 2006 flood was only released this year. Just one of its common-sense recommendations was that the province prohibit development on flood plains, but the government failed to take action on this obvious measure and put thousands of Albertan homes and families at risk. To the Premier: why?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that when I became minister, the Premier and I discussed the report and released it as soon as we were aware that it hadn't been released so that all Albertans could see it. We did discuss – and it happened to coincide with this flood event – the two recommendations dealing with preventing development in the floodway. As I said, I don't want to pre-empt the discussion that's going to happen today or the legislation that I'm going to introduce, so the member should just wait a little bit longer, and he'll be happy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Premier is taking a page from the Prime Minister on how to answer questions.

This government didn't implement recommendations to provide up-to-date flood maps and a registry so that potential homebuyers could avoid risking catastrophic loss. To the Premier: why not?

Mr. Griffiths: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have implemented that recommendation. I'm sure that the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development may want to supplement, but we've worked with municipalities to update that information. The fact is that most of those maps are incredibly accurate. The floodways and the flood fringes in those zones don't change year to year. They change after substantial events like we saw in High River. We're updating our maps as we proceed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, that concludes the leaders asking their questions. We're now going to proceed with question 6. I would remind you of the ruling I made earlier, and that was that the issue of supplementary questions is a good one. We all know that there should be no preamble that precedes them. I'll be clamping down on that starting today, and you are hereby reminded to review your questions, those of you who have questions coming up, to try and follow suit. We will allow a little bit of it, but I don't want it to get carried away. I have almost 20 people on the speaking roster who have questions, all of them just as important as your own.

Let's go. Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Ethics Investigations

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans can't trust this PC government after scandal upon scandal. Instead of beefing up legislation to keep MLAs in line, PC MLAs are more interested in protecting the government family. They brush off disturbing rulings by the Ethics Commissioner that absolve PC MLAs of fundamentally unethical conduct. Can the current chair of the Conflicts of Interest Act committee, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who's in charge of ethics, let us know if the replacement of the Ethics Commissioner is on the committee's agenda?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think . . .

Mr. Saskiw: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Redford: I think, Mr. Speaker, that it's going to be very important for the committee work of this House to happen. One of the things that I find rather ironic is that we seem to be in this political era that whenever the opposition likes the Ethics Commissioner's decision, they support the Ethics Commissioner. Whenever they don't like the Ethics Commissioner's decision, they don't support him. Some inconsistency, perhaps not a surprise from the opposition. No doubt the work of this House will continue. Important committee work will happen. I'm sure that the minister will be very happy to answer the question in the supplemental.

The Speaker: Hon. member, your point of order has been noted at 2:27.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier is currently under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner, can someone from the government please give Albertans an answer as to why PC MLAs voted to maintain the Alberta-only gag order

that restricts us as MLAs from asking questions in question period about the Premier's ongoing ethics investigation. What does she have to hide?

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think I've commented on this before. Hon. Government House Leader, if you wish to, answer the question. You're certainly not obliged to because there is an investigation that was referred to. That investigation is under way. So I'll leave it to your discretion.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, rather than raising a point of order, I was simply going to answer the question by saying that that hon. member should know, particularly as he is a deputy House leader who was looking for more resources to fund him in that position, that it's entirely inappropriate to ask a question in the House about the activity of a committee of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an MLA has been found to be in direct violation of the Conflicts of Interest Act legislation six times and lobbied on an issue that would benefit him personally, is it not clear that this piece of junk ethics legislation only serves to protect the Premier and her own MLAs?

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, if you wish to comment. I may have a comment after this.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what this hon. member ought to know and realize is that the Ethics Commissioner is an officer of the Assembly, and when there are issues with respect to the Conflicts of Interest Act, this officer of the Legislative Assembly does an appropriate investigation, comes to conclusions, and makes recommendations with respect to carrying out those conclusions. That's exactly what happened with respect to this case in the report that I assume you will table today. It's not in the mouths of us as legislators to come back at the end of the day and say that the Ethics Commissioner should be overruled in his determination. That's why we have independent officers of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: Hon. members, let me just remind you of a little peace, order, decorum, and respect not only for ourselves but also for the laws that govern this province. I just don't find it appropriate to refer to a piece of legislation that has come before this Assembly, been debated, as a piece of junk.

2:30

Mr. Saskiw: We can't question legislation?

The Speaker: Hon. member, please. I have the floor. I didn't interrupt you, and I don't expect you to interrupt me. Am I clear? Am I clear, sir? Yes? Thank you.

Now, please be reminded that there are legislative pieces that come before you. There are motions, there are bills that each one of you as members brings forward, and none of them are to be considered or referred to as a piece of junk. I will not tolerate that. So clean up your act, hon. member. Clean up your act, hon. member, or we will deal with the consequences of your not doing so. I'm not in a good mood on this point just now, as you can probably tell.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2:32, and it has been noted.

Let us move on. Calgary-Glenmore.

Government Policies

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the party across the way was busy this weekend revisiting issues the rest of the world decided 25 years ago, Premier, you had a busy week focusing on the issues that matter to Albertans. Can you update us on what else was accomplished in your meeting with the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, it was a very important meeting because, of course, we see a new mayor in Edmonton, and there's a real buzz in Edmonton right now about Mayor Iveson and some of the very exciting work that we're going to be able to do together with respect to building community. There's no doubt that as we move forward and we take a look at things such as public transit, ring roads, infrastructure, partnerships on social policy issues, the social policy framework, this will be very important.

In addition to that, I am very excited to talk to both mayors about working on trade missions together to make sure that we're telling Alberta's story and continuing to open new markets, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you. Premier, you were also focusing on building for the future and announced the tentative agreement on the Calgary ring road. What does this agreement mean for all of Alberta?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, when I was a community volunteer living in Lakeview, I remember sitting with people talking about the dream of having a highway that would allow traffic to travel from northern Alberta to southern Alberta with no traffic lights and no interruptions. Of course, the ring roads that have been put in place are an important part of that.

When I ran in 2008, Mr. Speaker, I made a commitment to my constituents that we would pursue the ring road and try to get it done. The southwest ring road in Calgary: the agreement with Tsuu T'ina allows us to complete the Calgary ring road. We're completing the Edmonton ring road. That's infrastructure that matters to the future of this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, this week Premier Wynne has pledged her support to you and our government on the Canadian energy strategy. Can you outline the impact on Alberta?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity on Friday morning to meet with Premier Wynne, and we talked about a number of issues. But as soon as we sat down, the first thing that she talked about was the importance of the Canadian energy strategy because it allows us all as Canadians to understand and talk about how we benefit from Alberta's incredible economic growth.

The second thing she said, Mr. Speaker, is that by understanding a Canadian energy strategy, it makes it easy for her to talk to people in Ontario about why the Energy East pipeline

matters. She's committed to it. That's good for Alberta, Ontario, and Canada.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try and strike a balance in between the last two presenters.

School Construction

Mr. McAllister: You know, I might be partial, but to me one of the most important things that government can do is build schools for our kids, and that's why it's so troubling to hear today that the province is not going to deliver on a promise to build 19 schools within three years because of a contract agreement. Now, let's remember that the government already reneged on the election promise to build 50 and renovate 70 during this term. We are in desperate need of schools for our kids. To the Minister of Infrastructure: how in the world did this happen, and can government not find a way to prioritize the building of schools?

Mr. Drysdale: Mr. Speaker, our government knows how important it is to build schools for our children and for our families in this province. It's very important, and we will deliver on these promises. The member is saying that we've reneged. We haven't reneged on anything. We will build 50 new schools and modernize 70. This P3 contract is not done. We've saved a lot of money for the province of Alberta by building P3s, and I will not apologize for that.

Mr. McAllister: Forgive me for not being convinced.

Mr. Speaker, our schools are bursting at the seams. Many of them look like modular factories, when you can find the modulars, that is. Given that and given that if these commitments are not met, we're going to have an incredibly large list of communities that will be unable to provide classrooms for our kids, I'll ask the Education minister: can you not work with your Infrastructure minister and government to make sure that government delivers on the promises that it makes to Albertans?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we are delivering on the promises we made to Albertans, and our Infrastructure minister is a big part of that. His department and my ministry are doing incredible work. As of right now there are about a hundred projects that have either just been completed or are under way and announced in this province. That's going to give us an incredible increased capacity in terms of desks and capacity for our students. Obviously, this tendering situation is not ideal, but as the minister said, he's able to move forward, and we're still going to be able to announce 50 new schools and 70 modernizations and even more on that.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, our kids are in hallways, they're on stages, they are in gymnasiums, and they are in community halls. Again to the Minister of Infrastructure: given the obvious problem here, couldn't the government spend less time putting up signs all over the province telling everybody what it intends on doing and then taking pictures in front of them and maybe more time walking the walk and building the schools that the kids in this province so desperately need?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, in answering this question, I'll strongly recommend that this member pick up his leader's speech of this morning and try to correlate his request for additional

schools, for additional trailers with her promise of not having any more debt and extinguishing Albertans' debt. You can't have both. This government has made a promise to deliver, to build for the growth in this province, to provide children with classrooms, to provide seniors with housing, to provide patients with hospital space, not based on the notes from the leader of extinguishing hope and not building anymore and not to incur any debt, as she tends to call it. Get your story straight.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie, your point of order at 2:38 has been noted.

Let us move on. Keep the preambles to those sups as short as you can. As I indicated earlier, I appreciate your co-operation.

Edmonton-McClung, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent budget changes at the University of Alberta have some of my constituents worried that the quality of education will be adversely affected and will further impact the quality of postsecondary education in our province. My question is to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education. How can I assure my constituents that this budget change will not affect the quality of the University of Alberta's excellent student education, that Albertans have come to expect?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest to the member that first he assure his constituents that in Campus Alberta we have very committed chairs, very committed boards, and definitely very committed presidents and administrators to deal with whatever budgetary situation they are faced with in a manner that least affects the students. Actually, all of them deserve our gratitude for doing just so. They have made very difficult decisions in view of the budget, just like this government had to make some very difficult decisions, but being very student focused.

Mr. Xiao: To the same minister: given that as a result of the budget shortfall the University of Alberta suspended 20 arts programs this fall, why was there such an overwhelming amount of arts programs suspended versus other programs?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, all schools have made decisions based on their priorities, based on enrolment, based on participation. No matter what the budget is, every year new programs get put on, and old ones get eliminated. That simply happens.

I have to assure you of one thing, Mr. Speaker. This government knows the importance of arts. We know that if we are to grow, if we are to attract high-calibre Albertans, and if we are to retain Albertans in this province, we not only need a strong economy, but we need the quality of life that we get through culture and in arts.

2:40

Mr. Xiao: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that recent reports have top-tier executive salaries at the postsecondary institutions reaching upward of \$500,000 plus, are there any plans to review executive pay at universities?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I have been meeting with chairs of all postsecondary schools, not only in groups at the table, but I have actually travelled to most if not all of the schools and met with them individually. My message to them has been always very

clear. We are dealing with a very difficult financial situation, and in view of some of the unprecedented drop in revenue and the disaster expenditures, we have taken very difficult but necessary steps, and I expect those chairs to make similar decisions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Municipal Charters

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: is the reason the minister has reneged on or postponed or perhaps misplaced his promise and that of the Premier for city charters for both Edmonton and Calgary because it could affect the province's taxation powers? In the end, is this all about keeping the cities starved for resources and under the government's thumb?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I would have to admit that the flood pushed us a little bit behind on the work on the civic charters, but the work on the charter is a three-way partnership. It's not up to just the Minister of Municipal Affairs to impose a charter. We're working on a collective three-way agreement. We got very, very close before the municipal election because we restarted the discussions about a month ago, but the mayor of Edmonton at that time said that he thought it was a prerogative of the new mayor and council to sign on it. So we have most of the work completed and carry on from there.

Ms Blakeman: Oh. Well, a change in tune. Thanks very much, Mr. Minister.

Given that he was talking about not big-city charters but civic charters a month ago and that the cities have been consistent in talking about big-city charters, can he explain why he's insisted on dumping these cities of hundreds of thousands of people in the same pot with towns and villages? I know he likes to talk about going to 343 of them, but do you not recognize the difference, or is this an attempt to minimize their influence on the life of the province?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I completely recognize the difference, but I also respect every single one of the 349 municipalities in this province. To say that they're big-city charters leaves out Lethbridge and Medicine Hat and Red Deer and other municipalities which also might want to assume new responsibilities to serve their citizens, which is why – I don't care what they call them; I refer to it as a civic charter – it's going to be a charter about the new, invigorated relationship between our municipalities and this province.

Ms Blakeman: Well, given that both cities elected young, progressive, popular mayors and popularity is really attractive, why doesn't the minister just ride on their coattails and bring in the big-city charter they campaigned for? Go ahead.

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I see it's comedy hour already on the first day.

Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the minister himself and the mayors are all young, we're going to sit down, as I've said already, and start from an agreement that's 95 per cent in place and continue to work there to make sure that we have something in place that other municipalities will be able to adopt and work towards if they want to so that every single level of government in this province is able to best serve their municipalities. Period.

Education Funding

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, students, support staff, and teachers across the province came back to schools and classrooms this fall and immediately felt the effects of this government's broken promises to education. You can't put 11,000 more kids into a system while slashing \$14.5 million from the Education budget without negative consequences. Simply put, more students with fewer dollars equals less learning. To the Education minister: why won't the minister admit that this PC government's cuts are hurting kids, support staff, and teachers?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, what I will admit is that this member needs to do better homework. If you look at the budget, I'm not sure where this \$14 million cut comes from. As a matter of fact, I've got the budget in front of me, and the estimates for 2013-14 are \$6.13 million, up from \$6.085 million, and that's just the operations. If you include the incremental enrolment and the promise that we have to fund those incremental students in the system and the capital, there's approximately \$300 million more in the budget this year than there was last year. I don't know how the math works over there, but in anybody's books that's an increase, not a cut.

Mr. Bilous: Promise made, promise broken.

Mr. Speaker, given that a typical classroom today is not only larger but is made up of an increasing number of students with special needs, including behavioural issues – there are English language learners and many others – and given that 500 positions were cut out of the education system due to this PC government's broken-promises budget, when will the minister realize that this government's short-sighted budget cuts to education have failed Alberta students?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, this certainly is a challenging budget, and school boards are going to have challenges with any budget. Obviously, one of the things people look at is class size, but I would agree with the member that one of the things we look at very closely – and it is one the more important things going forward – is the quality of the teacher in the classroom and the supports they have and what we're putting toward inclusion. That's another area of the budget that we increased this last year. I know this is his first day in question period as the Education critic, but if he did his homework, he would know that the class size initiative and the special-needs funding both went up last year.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that there was already a funding shortfall prior to Budget 2013, it's simply misleading to say that per-student funding is enough to make up for that shortfall. To the Minister of Education: are Alberta's staff, teachers, and kids really such a low priority for this PC government?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, you know, he may not be a math teacher, but he does know the answer to that question. Through Inspiring Ed and other things we've shown and we have proven that we're putting kids first, and we're investing an incredible amount of money into education, more than any other province or jurisdiction virtually in North America.

Now, we can be very proud of our system. Coming back from OECD meetings with 43 other Education ministers from across the globe, we learned that Canada scored extremely well on some of the international tests that were done over the last decade and Alberta scored top of all of the Canadian jurisdictions in all three categories.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Edmonton-Riverview.

Health Care Wait Times (continued)

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose cares about patients who are suffering with long wait times in our province, but no matter who this government puts in charge, things are just not getting better. The problem isn't new. It has existed for years, and this government has been told over and over and over. We can only be thankful for the heroic work of our health care professionals, who are keeping our health care system together. Can the Minister of Health tell Albertans why he is failing to put a stop to growing wait times, leaving Albertans to suffer?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government takes the issue of wait times very seriously. In answer to the earlier question asked by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, I talked about some of our successes in reducing hip and knee surgery wait times, in reducing cataract surgeries, in reducing the wait for bypass surgeries. There is much work to be done right across the country, including here in Alberta. The answers to this in many cases are found in innovation. If we look to central assessment and central intake of patients as we are doing in the case of hip and knee surgery, we see amazing results, and the hon. member is right to credit front-line workers for its success.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you. Given that this is impacting real people and that they expect real answers and that today's report shows that Albertans are waiting an astonishing 128 weeks for cornea transplants while people in Nova Scotia only have to wait 24 weeks, will the minister explain why he waited until last Friday, to do a press release, to buy more transplant tissues while Albertans have been left suffering?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the hon. member recognizes the initiative that has been undertaken to reduce waiting times for cornea transplants. As the hon. member probably knows, there is a growing demand for this procedure. It's often conducted in connection with cataract surgery. Last week we showed that Alberta once again leads the country. Our plan to import additional cornea tissue from B.C. and the United States will allow us to do an additional 500 surgeries between now and Christmas and reduce the waiting time from three years in the past to three months.

2:50

Mrs. Forsyth: Minister, you should have done it earlier.

You know what is extreme, Mr. Speaker? Albertans waiting three weeks for a pacemaker when the Canadian average is three and a half days. Why, Minister? Why?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, what is extreme is the notion put forward earlier this afternoon in question period by the Leader of the Official Opposition that the solution to reducing wait times in our province should be to send patients outside of our jurisdiction and perhaps outside of the country, for all we know, in order to receive services that are here and available in Alberta. We are leading the country in terms of innovation to reduce waiting times in many, many areas. It's a testament to the innovation and hard work of front-line staff in Alberta Health Services, and I thank them for it.

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

Firearm Collection by Emergency Responders

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer saw an unprecedented flood and an equally unprecedented response: our front-line responders of emergency management, police, fire, EMS, utility companies, and the Red Cross, to name a few, as well as the individual Albertans that helped out in heroic ways. Some of the front-line responders, the men and women of the RCMP, have been unfairly accused of inappropriately seizing firearms from homes. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: were the men and women of the RCMP that were dealing with the emergency response directed in any way to search for firearms?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure this member, being a former staff sergeant with the Edmonton Police Service, knows full well that police do not take orders from politicians in Alberta or anywhere else in the country. To answer his question, there was no such order from my office or anyone in this government. I would refer him to section 117.04(2) of the federal Criminal Code and section 19 of the Emergency Management Act, both of which give the authority for police officers to enter businesses or private homes to save lives and protect property. We owe a debt of gratitude to all of our first responders.

Mr. Young: To the minister: when did you first hear about the seizure of firearms, and what was your response?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was there firsthand, and I saw cars floating everywhere. I saw absolute destruction everywhere. One of the first things I did was go to the RCMP detachment on June 26. On June 27 I sent a letter to Deputy Commissioner Dale McGowan, which I will table later today, confirming that law-abiding firearms owners' rights would be respected just like this government has done for the last 20 years.

Mr. Young: Are the firearms that were seized for safekeeping going to be returned to their owners?

Mr. Denis: Well, Mr. Speaker, my department has advised me today that approximately 95 per cent of the firearms that were stored actually have been returned. It's over 500 that have been collected and returned. On top of that, the RCMP executed 600 rooftop rescues and saved 650 pets. This government is proud to stand up for the RCMP, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who didn't even thank the RCMP today in her statement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Emergency Medical Service Response Times

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Southern Alberta is in a crisis due to shortages. Rural ambulance wait times are often up to 45 minutes after years of tinkering with this by government, and it is putting residents at risk. For a farmer who collapses in his field, a gardener experiencing sudden chest pain, or a senior in a facility a

half hour truly means the difference between life and death. To the Minister of Health: what are you doing to address this unacceptable government failure within Alberta's ambulance system?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago the government made a policy decision, and in my view it is completely in line with what Albertans expect. We recognize the fact that EMS is health care. We have a proud tradition of some EMS services continuing today to be offered by municipalities across the province, but we recognize that for many Albertans the front door to the health system is often that emergency medical services worker that responds to them when they're in need. As the hon. member knows, we've taken initiatives to centralize dispatch across the province. We continue to work with municipalities on other measures to improve the service.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that more than 14 reeves and mayors from across rural Alberta wrote the minister a letter, which I'll be tabling, by the way, here in a few minutes, requesting that he reconsider plans to consolidate ambulance services, can the minister say now whether or not he plans on finally meeting with these community leaders and working with them, not against them, to fix these EMS wait times?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I know the letter very well, and if the hon. member has studied the letter, he will also know that the majority of mayors who signed it have already consolidated their local dispatch service with the Alberta Health Services central dispatch system. We continue to work with municipalities in the case of cities such as Red Deer and Lethbridge. We're working very closely with elected officials there to time the consolidation of dispatch in a way that will be streamlined and seamless from the point of view of people who use the service. This is a vast improvement in Canada in the delivery of EMS, and we continue to see it through.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm not sure if that's exactly true, but given that Albertans' lives depend on immediate response times, can the minister explain how centralizing ambulance services to Alberta's two major cities serves our rural municipalities better, or is this due to become just another failed policy on this minister's record?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, the initiative is around the centralization of the dispatch function, not all of the EMS services. As the hon. member will know, there are multiple areas in the province still today – they are dwindling in number – where the dispatch services cannot be looked at and managed on a provincial basis. The result – and it might be the case in the hon. member's own constituency – is that entire areas of the province appear dark when it comes to organization and deployment of emergency medical services resources. This is an issue the hon. member should be concerned about because it will result in his ambulances being available to people when he needs them most.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order during the minister's first answer, at 2:55, and it was noted.

Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Trade with China

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's strong trade relationship with China continues to grow. Last month our Premier went on a 12-day trade mission to China, which is the third visit since she became Premier. As globalization continues, countries will inevitably become interconnected and also, in the meantime, compete to access emerging markets like China. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What was the outcome of those trips that we made, and can you comment specifically on how we are attracting Chinese foreign investment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dallas: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pillar of the building Alberta plan, a top priority for the government is opening up new markets. It's about realizing fair prices, and it's about getting optimum access for our products and services. The Premier's recent mission to China really introduced potential investors and buyers to opportunities that exist right here in Alberta, and it provided support to those businesses and investors that grows their business.

Mr. Luan: Given the subsequent trip, where I think the Minister of Energy went to China and signed an agreement with the President of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, my question to the same minister is: what's the significance of this agreement?

Mr. Dallas: Well, Mr. Speaker, energy security is a key driver for Chinese energy policy. This historic agreement, signed by my colleague the Minister of Energy, recognizes that there are mutual benefits and opportunities in energy collaboration to work on. In particular, that framework allows for co-operation on policy and regulatory best practices in unconventional resource development, collaboration on integrated resource management, sharing of knowledge on carbon capture and storage, and the implementation of a technical series for our industry leaders.

Mr. Luan: My last supplemental question to the same minister. Given all those opportunities we have for working with China, can you help us to understand: will those opportunities translate into any tangible gains for Alberta?

Mr. Dallas: Yes. Mr. Speaker, these opportunities are very significant. I mean, Asia is expected to account for around 60 per cent of global middle-class consumption by 2030. Our plan is to capitalize on this opportunity. It's part of our renewed international strategy. We'll work closely with partners in the region, we'll identify and advance areas of mutual interest, we'll develop strategic relationships, and we'll address barriers to diversification for world markets.

3:00

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, you actually rose on a point of order in response to the second response given by the Minister of Justice, not the one by the Minister of Health, and I've been informed of that, so that has been corrected. Thank you very much.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Official Opposition and Government Policies

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me take you back. We all remember the debacle that was Coke classic. It was supposed to be an improvement on the original Coke, but it was widely rejected by consumers because it was a pale imitation of the real thing. The Official Opposition has now embarked on their own new-Coke debacle, having added heaping doses of artificial sweetener to try to make their extreme policies more politically palatable.

Mr. Speaker, they claim to believe in climate change. They claim to believe in equality. They claim to believe in all sorts of things, but these are not the same claims they have made in the past. These are not even the same claims they made last Thursday. It's just fake sweetness to mask the bitter taste of intolerance and extremism.

While they claim all these things, Mr. Speaker, this government actually believes in climate change. We believe in equality. We believe in dignity and human rights, and we believe in building Alberta. We believe in making this Alberta the best place to live for the 4 million Albertans of today and the million more who will make this province their home in the next decade.

They want to pretend they're progressive conservatives, Mr. Speaker, but they're not. They are new Coke. They're still the same old party. They're still extreme and intolerant. As new Coke was full of empty calories, the party across the way is full of empty promises. Albertans deserve better.

Speaker's Ruling

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, there's a long-standing tradition in this House that we do not interrupt members when they're giving a private member's statement. Now, over 20 years, believe me, I've heard many private members' statements, and some have been humorous, some have been poisonous, some have been off the wall, and some have actually been right on topic. I would ask again, House leaders: please review this matter. I ignored two or three people who were thinking of raising a point of order during this last exchange, and I would ask also that all of you review the courtesy of not interrupting another member when he or she is giving a private member's statement.

In the end, I would ask all of you to please review your private members' statements and be careful of no personal attacks, no personality attacks, and so on. I'm not saying that one was. I'm just saying: please, let's review this. We're off to a reasonably good day given one or two little faltering. Let's please try and stay at the highest level possible here, I ask, please.

Let us move on, then, to the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Official Opposition Policies

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend our Wildrose caucus attended our party's AGM in Red Deer to discuss and debate policy. We passed policies on fiscal responsibility, government transparency, funding for students with special needs, protection for seniors and the vulnerable, and lowering our province's emissions, just to name a few. We also rescinded several policies that were confusing and outdated. Our entire membership and caucus also unanimously passed a powerful statement affirming what we've always believed, that all men and women are and must be treated as equal by their government regardless of who they are or where they come from.

I'd also like to thank the minister of sightseeing and five-star hotels for attending our AGM and affirming for all Albertans how utterly terrified this PC government is of losing power in 2016. Well done, sir, and well done, Mr. Baranski, wherever you are. The PCs will continue to use fearmongering and smear tactics to attack the Wildrose because that's all they've got left, but as we've seen in federal politics, the fear card doesn't work more than once. Eventually people just stop believing you, and when they do, they'll look at your record, and your record stinks. It's a record of debt and deficits. It's a record of scandal and ethical failures. It's a record of cuts to the vulnerable and pay raises for MLAs and golden handshakes for your buddies. It's a record of bullying, intimidation, and of total, utter incompetence. It's a record that will come to an end in 2016.

The Wildrose is ready to lead. We are ready to balance the budget, end the days of debt. We are ready to clean out and disinfect these halls of cronyism and backroom dealing. We are ready to empower local communities to govern themselves, to axe corporate subsidies and executive perks for government and health executives, and to instead spend tax dollars on what matters: caring for the vulnerable and the sick, educating our children, and building core infrastructure. The Wildrose is here to give Alberta back to Albertans, Mr. Speaker, and we aren't going anywhere until that happens.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Flood Recovery

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The events of June 20 changed the lives of thousands of Albertans and the ways we think about ourselves, our community, and our government. It was a terrifying example of the powers of nature and has resulted in a renewed appreciation and respect for the watersheds in which we live.

In my constituency of Banff-Cochrane the communities of Canmore, Exshaw, Lac des Arcs, Benchlands, and Bragg Creek all sustained significant damage. As well, much of the infrastructure in Kananaskis Country was destroyed, and businesses like TransAlta, Lafarge, and Sunshine Village sustained millions of dollars of damage, not to mention the hundreds of small businesses that were affected by the flooding.

Mr. Speaker, the common thread among all affected communities was the strength, resilience, and compassion of otherwise ordinary Albertans that stepped to the aid of their neighbours and their communities, many without a thought to their own personal risk. They are truly heroes, each and every one, in their own right. We all have the right to be very proud as Albertans for the way in which we have dealt with this disaster.

The government has demonstrated amazing leadership from the first minutes of this disaster, and the co-operation and responsiveness of all ministries is greatly appreciated by everyone affected. I would like to personally thank, though, Associate Minister Fawcett and his staff, who have worked tirelessly for our communities.

Mr. Speaker, when we elect our leaders, we do so on the basis of those qualities that we associate with leadership – strength, integrity, knowledge, and so on – but seldom do we ever really have an opportunity to see if those qualities translate into a leader. We are indeed fortunate in Alberta that the leadership qualities we saw in Premier Redford two years ago did in fact lead to the emergence of a compassionate, strong, and insightful leader at a time when we needed one the most. To the Premier: thank you.

The Speaker: Remember, hon. members, that we do not use first names or surnames in the Assembly. I know you all know that, but it's just a reminder.

Let us move on, then, to Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Calgary-Fort.

Calgary Southwest Ring Road

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 25, 2013, an important announcement was made by the Premier and the Minister of Transportation, and that was the tentative agreement between the province of Alberta and the Tsuu T'ina Nation regarding the southwest portion of the Calgary ring road. This road has been shown in transportation plans for over 60 years and has been and will continue to be a major concern to my constituents for, you see, the southwest ring road path runs parallel to the entire west boundary of my constituency. A north-south roadway between Anderson Road and Glenmore Trail has long been considered, and the announcement indicates to residents of Cedarbrae, Oakridge, and Lakeview that the section of 37th Street west of their homes will not be part of the road. I want to sincerely thank the residents of Calgary-Glenmore who have kept this issue front and centre for many years. This is a first step, and I will continue to work with them to make this road a reality.

3:10

Unfortunately, the plan does mean that several important buildings such as the Sarcee Seven Chiefs Sportsplex, the Chief Joseph Big Plume Building, the Tsuu T'ina Nation Culture Museum, and the Buffalo Run Golf Course along with several houses will have to be moved. These buildings are homes, employment places, and recreational centres for nation residents and Calgarians. To quote Chief Whitney: my heart, my compassion goes to the residents who will have to relocate and accommodate this project.

Completing the Calgary ring road is an investment in building Alberta, and it will bring benefits for the safety, prosperity, and success of Calgarians, the Tsuu T'ina, and all Albertans as it will dramatically improve traffic flows in, through, and around the Calgary region. My heartfelt appreciation to the Premier, the Minister of Transportation, Chief Whitney, and the people of Tsuu T'ina, who have been working together to achieve this agreement. I would also like to acknowledge the city of Calgary for their support of the project. Thank you, colleagues, for this is another example of promises made, promises kept.

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

Calgary Zoo Flood Recovery

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring everyone witnessed damaging, devastating images of flooding in southern Alberta. Communities along the Bow and Elbow rivers in my constituency were hit but through their own strength made a quick recovery.

Today I wish to talk about the Calgary Zoo, one of the areas totally hit by the flood. Many vulnerable and extremely frightened animals were impacted at the zoo as the flood waters rose. Zoo employees risked their lives countless times through chest-deep water to ensure animals were safely evacuated. Unfortunately, several animals perished during the flood, including many tropical fish and a peacock.

I had the opportunity to visit the mud-covered zoo right after the water had receded and the cleanup got started. In addition to the animals' displacement and loss of life, the estimated financial cost

to the zoo was \$60 million, including \$50 million in damages and \$10 million in lost revenue.

Now, several months later, the Calgary Zoo is closer to getting back on its feet thanks to the hard work of the zoo employees, volunteers, and many ordinary Calgarians. Within a month's time all employees, volunteers, and sponsors will see their months of hard work come to fruition. The Calgary Zoo is scheduled to reopen on November 28. I'm proud to live in a city where generosity runs high and where citizens demonstrate so much tenacity in getting the city back on its feet. Because of their hard work the Calgary Zoo once again will prosper and be restored to its place as the best in the province and the best zoo in the world.

Our thanks go to the Calgary Zoo leadership, led by Dr. Clément Lanthier, and many dedicated staff and volunteers and donors. Alberta is simply the place for people with the spirit to achieve.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Richard Arthur Miller

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to remember Rick Miller, who died of prostate cancer on Saturday at the age of 53. [applause] Thank you. Rick served as MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford from 2004 to '08 and as finance critic and caucus whip for the Liberals. Later he worked as chief of staff for the official Liberal caucus.

In addition to his public life, Rick was a committed Rotarian, always volunteering time for projects. He was a successful owner of a family business, Alberta Stamp and Marking, and an avid hang-glider. He was proud of his family and brought his kids to the Legislature and to political functions whenever he could. He had a great extended family and somehow managed to spend time with them and carry out all of his caucus, constituency, and party duties.

It was Rick's tireless work – sorry, fellas – not the Wildrose's, which uncovered the donations from the municipalities to the governing party, resulting in the warlords of Alberta series of releases. Rick was an honourable politician, who preserved the integrity of our democratic institutions. He was easy to work with no matter which side of the House you were on. He brought a steady, practical, and warm presence to whatever he did.

I have two favourite Assembly stories about Rick. In the spring of 2005 Reverend Abbott, then the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor, described a federal MP, Belinda Stronach, as whoring herself out for power. The next day Rick used his private member's statement to talk about how important it was for everyone, but especially men, to mentor and encourage young women to participate fully in democratic society. He was clearly thinking about his own daughter, but I was struck by how forward thinking and positive Rick's response to Reverend Abbott's terrible comments was.

Rick loved being a politician and was fond of saying: "We have the best job in the world. We get paid to try and overthrow the government."

But one last quote. Rick was once accused of falling asleep in this Chamber. When questioned, he retorted that he wasn't sleeping; he was merely resting.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, and may he continue his rest in peace.

May we revert to the introduction of visitors?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Visitors

(continued)

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

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly guests that we have here in the gallery today from the Alberta Environmental Monitoring Management Board, that are seated in our members' gallery. I am so proud to introduce them here as part of this monumental day. I would like to recognize the outstanding work these individuals have put forward in the legislation that I'll table later on this afternoon.

We have joining us Dr. Gregory Taylor from the University of Alberta. I also want to congratulate Dr. Taylor on receiving the outstanding contribution to the Alberta science and technology community award this weekend, including a \$10,000 prize. Congratulations to Dr. Howard Tennant, our chair of our advisory board; Dr. Arlene Ponting, CEO of the science Alberta foundation; Dr. Ron Wallace, a former board member of Wildlife Habitat Canada and former executive director of the Northwest Territories Water Board; Mr. Doug Tupper, who is the former assistant deputy minister in the department of environment; Mr. Paul Clark, a board member of the National Research Council Canada and the Alberta Science and Research Authority; and Mr. Neil McCrank, who is with us here as well, a former ERCB CEO.

Special thank you to two of our outstanding staff with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, our CEO and the CEO of monitoring, Ernie Hui, and someone who is very dear to our hearts, who couldn't join us here today but is in our thoughts and prayers, Mr. Bob Barraclough, the ADM of monitoring transition.

I want to thank all of you for the outstanding work. What we table today is from the efforts of you and so many people, so thank you very much for being with us here today. Please, if you can, rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities I'm pleased to table copies of the committee's report on Bill 204, the Irlen Syndrome Testing Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North and referred to the committee on April 22, 2013.

I'd like to acknowledge the support provided by the staff of the Legislative Assembly Office. A sincere appreciation is also extended to the organizations and individuals who contributed written submissions and made oral presentations as part of our review of the process. I'd also like to thank my fellow committee members, representing all parties in the Assembly, who worked together to ensure that a thorough, co-operative review was done of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the report includes the committee's recommendations to the ministries of Education and Health to ensure that children throughout Alberta who suffer from visual challenges are accommodated appropriately so they may reach their full

academic potential. The report also includes the committee's recommendation that Bill 204 not proceed.

I request the concurrence of the Assembly with respect to the report on Bill 204, the Irlen Syndrome Testing Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 78.4(b) I stand to speak to the concurrence motion regarding the referral of Bill 204.

Speaker's Ruling Debate on Private Members' Public Bills

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but I must because we have a very unique situation that has arisen here on which I need to make a few brief comments.

As members have just heard, the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities has just presented a report from that committee on Bill 204, known as the Irlen Syndrome Testing Act. The chair moved that the Assembly concur in that report. This follows the usual practice when this type of committee reports on a bill that has been referred to it by this Assembly. The unique part here, however, is that motions for concurrence from this type of committee have not been debated in the past once they have been presented and a motion for concurrence has been uttered.

At this time the Assembly is still considering items in the daily Routine, which is not the usual time for debating motions. In fact, Standing Order 2 states in part that "In all contingencies unprovided for, the question shall be decided by the Speaker," and it continues on. In this case the committee's report concerns a private member's public bill. Therefore, it would be inappropriate in the chair's view to ask the Government House Leader and other members to find time to schedule a debate on the motion for concurrence during government business since it is a private member's public bill.

Accordingly, it also seems to me that the more logical time to debate this motion for concurrence or otherwise is during the item known as Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders. This item of business, as you all know, occurs on Monday afternoons, which means that our Assembly will have an opportunity to debate this motion further, in fact, today, this afternoon to be exact, immediately after the items of business called Written Questions and Motions for Returns. My understanding is that there is only one written question for consideration today, which means that we should have ample time for the said debate to carry on.

Furthermore and in keeping with the time limits for private members' public bills found in Standing Order 29(3), members who wish to participate in the debate on the concurrence motion will be limited to 10 minutes each in their speaking time. The mover of the motion will of course have five minutes to close debate thereafter. As I've said, there should be lots of time to do that this afternoon. At least, we hope so.

So thank you for your attention and providing me with this opportunity to provide some direction on this unique situation. As always, I am interested in any comments that you might have regarding what I've just said, in particular from the House leaders but also from members in general, outside of the proceedings of

the Assembly in this regard. If you wish to write to me, please let me know.

Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

(continued)

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

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship I'm pleased to table copies of a report on Bill 205, Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2012, sponsored by the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake and referred to the committee on April 22, 2013.

I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the Legislative Assembly Office staff for their always excellent work on this report, and I'd also like to thank the presenters from the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development for their presentation and subsequent written submission to the committee on the issues raised on this bill. Finally, I'd like to thank my fellow committee members for their ongoing dedication to all matters examined by our committee and for their endorsement of a very practical solution here.

Mr. Speaker, the report recommends that the committee shall request an annual update from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development for up to three years on the department's commercial fishing consultation practices, including any recommendations for improvement. The report also includes the committee's recommendation that the bill not proceed.

I request the concurrence of the Assembly with respect to the report on Bill 205, Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2012.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Calahasen: I also want to rise today to speak under Standing Order 78.4(b), to talk about this, to debate this.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. As I just indicated to the Member for Red Deer-North and to all members, the most appropriate time for the debate on this matter and other such committee motions for concurrence would be this afternoon once we get to that stage. It'll take place prior to 5 o'clock. That having been said, we'll proceed on that basis.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, you have a notice of motion?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30 and after providing your office with the appropriate notice this morning, I wish to inform you that on the completion of the daily Routine I move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to hold an emergency debate on a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the negative impacts on patient care and safety resulting from Alberta Health Services' decision in June 2013 to significantly reduce the number of home-care providers in Edmonton and in Calgary by cancelling contracts with existing providers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 27

Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 27, the Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act. The intent of this legislation is to improve the safety of Albertans and help municipalities develop stronger and more resilient communities. The act will help address challenges stemming from the recent and unprecedented flooding in several ways. It will protect potential buyers of properties in flood hazard areas by giving the government authority to place notices on land titles that indicate whether a property is eligible for disaster assistance in the event of another flood. It will also help to reduce and prevent the building within floodways. It will make flood mitigation funding available for funding applicants by establishing authority for this funding under the Emergency Management Act as a standard item of disaster recovery programs and give us the option to extend the duration of a provincial state of emergency from 14 to 28 days without having to return to the Legislature, thereby reducing the amount of time government officials spend on administrative and legislative tasks during an emergency so we can focus on the task at hand.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to speaking more about the benefits of this legislation in the days and weeks to come. I'm confident that this will result in enhanced safety for all Albertans and Alberta communities. I'm proud to table Bill 27, the Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act, and move that this bill be read for the first time.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, you have another bill?

Bill 28

Modernizing Regional Governance Act

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm also pleased to introduce Bill 28, the Modernizing Regional Governance Act, which involves amendments to the Municipal Government Act, commonly referred to as the MGA. The amendments will formally legislate the Capital Region Board and enable the creation of other growth-management boards in Alberta. The Capital Region Board is a 24-member intermunicipal organization responsible for co-ordinating development between municipal jurisdictions, including land-use planning, interregional transit planning, and land, air, and water considerations, for integration into plans. These amendments will result in a more proactive approach to managing development in high-growth areas of our province. I look forward in the weeks and months ahead to debating this bill as we move forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Bill 29

Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2013

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 29, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2013. Bill 29 would ensure that Alberta's drug list is accurate and enforceable and reflects changes at Health Canada as they move to an online prescription drug list that will be easier for Alberta's

pharmacists to access and understand. This amendment to the Pharmacy and Drug Act will replace all references to schedule F with references to the prescription drug list which takes effect this December. As such, these amendments are administrative in nature, and I request the support of the House for first reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

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

3:30

Bill 31 Protecting Alberta's Environment Act

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 31, the Protecting Alberta's Environment Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Bill 31 will establish the Alberta environmental monitoring, evaluation, and reporting agency. It will be the first of its kind in Canada and will fundamentally change the way Alberta's environment is monitored. This arm's-length, open, and transparent public agency will lead environmental monitoring in Alberta. Its focus will be on sound science, a comprehensive, coordinated monitoring and reporting of land, air, water, and biodiversity, beginning in the oil sands area. The work of this agency will provide the best possible data that will be used to make the best possible decisions when it comes to responsible development of the province's natural resources.

This bill also creates a science advisory panel, that will oversee the scientific work of the agency to ensure integrity is maintained. This is yet another step, Mr. Speaker, that this government has taken to demonstrate to Albertans and to the world that we are committed to environmental stewardship and responsible resource development.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful to my guests that are in the House today for all the excellent work and advice they have given to provide for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, do you have a tabling?

Ms Blakeman: I do indeed, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today, both of them, interestingly, on the same subject. The first is an e-mail that I received from Garrick Burron over the summer, who wanted to bring to my attention and asked me to work toward a change in legislation regarding the number of properties that are available for rent that would allow people to have small pets. He notes that given the amount of academic literature supporting companion animal benefits, "having animals available for renters will improve the lives and health of a sizeable percentage of Albertans."

The second e-mail is also from a constituent, Diana Sully. She brings the same argument forward but specific to seniors and is trying to get people to support her and others in the ability of seniors to be renting or having affordable units to live in that would allow them to keep a small pet.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings for you today, five copies of each. The first one is a letter that I wrote to Dale McGowan, the deputy commissioner of RCMP K Division, on June 27 asking to confirm that the firearms in High River were stored and not confiscated or seized.

The second item was the response on June 28, indicating, among other things, that these items are temporarily stored by the RCMP in anticipation of their safe return to lawful owners.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Livingstone-Macleod, did you have a tabling?

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to table today five copies of the letter I made reference to earlier from the city of Lethbridge with regard to the request to reconsider the decision to consolidate ambulance dispatch services.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Highwood I'd like to table today Studies in Health Policy dated October 2013 and entitled Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada, 2013 Report, that she referred to in her questions with regard to wait times.

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

Mr. Eggen: Yes. On behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter sent to Mr. Johnson by Frank Bruseker, president of ATA local 38. Mr. Bruseker's letter raises alarming concerns about teacher burnout in Calgary public schools due to larger class sizes that they're experiencing this year, a direct result of the cuts to Education. This letter was sent on September 27, 2013, yet a month later, till this date, Mr. Bruseker has yet to receive a response to these concerns.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

If not, then I will take the liberty to also make three tablings, with the requisite number of copies being provided in each case. First, a letter, dated August 29, from the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo indicating his resignation from the following three committees: the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, and the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee.

Secondly, pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table with members copies of Members' Services Committee Order 07/13, entitled Members' Allowances Amendment Order (No. 27), dealing with members' temporary residence allowance, deemed effective September 1, 2013.

Thirdly, two reports, dated October 16, 2013, from the office of the Ethics Commissioner regarding the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning which, as required, were made public and distributed to members on the same day received, which was October 16, 2013.

Let's deal with the points of order. I think we have four.

The first point of order that I have was from the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. Would you like to proceed, sir?

Point of Order

Questions to Committee Chairmen

Mr. Saskiw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise according to Standing Order 23(1), a relatively rarely used section in the standing orders. It relates to introducing any matter in debate that offends practices and precedents in this Assembly. Actually, this was with respect to a question that was asked to a chair of a current committee, and that's the Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee. Subsequently the Premier, or the government in a sense, answered it. According to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it states that "questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to Chairs of committees." I had asked a question with respect to the agenda of the Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to a ruling dated May 1, 1997, as well as a ruling on April 24, 1997, which highlight the ability of members in this Assembly to ask questions to chairs of respective committees provided that the scope is limited to procedural matters such as agendas and other procedural issues. Specifically, it states that

questions may be put to members who chair statutorily created boards, committees, or commissions but must relate directly to their responsibilities as an executive of that body. Once again, [obviously the chairs] cannot speak for the government, so questions of policy must go to a member of Executive Council.

3:40

In this circumstance, Mr. Speaker, I had asked a question directly to a chair with respect to an agenda of the committee, and in this instance the Premier interrupted, which is contrary to the practices and precedents of this Assembly, as is outlined both in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* as well as the rulings of this Assembly. I'm not 100 per cent certain what the effective remedy is here, but I guess just a reiteration that we are allowed to ask chairs of committees and that subsequently we can ask this question again and that it not be answered by the government but, rather, the respective chair.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the hon. member knows that what he was trying to do with his question was to get up to some mischief. He knows that the chair of that committee has tendered a letter of resignation and that there's a motion on the Order Paper, which will be dealt with tomorrow, with respect to changing membership on committees.

He also knows, if he reads the sections that he referred to, that the footnote on page 506, footnote 90, indicates that the Speaker may recognize whomever rises to answer the question. In fact, the only person who rose to answer the question was the Premier, and it was quite within her purview to do so, recognizing the mischief that the hon. member was up to. Subsequently I rose to answer the follow-up question and indicated that it's not actually the normal practice of this House, notwithstanding *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, to actually ask questions of the chairs of committees because there is a forum for those questions to be asked with respect to the agenda, and that is in the committees.

The question that was asked was actually bordering on a question of whether or not – in fact, I think the preamble to the question indicated some discussion about the proceedings in the committee. In fact, the question that the Premier responded to, as I recall, dealt more with what members of the committee had done

or not done in the committee, which is clearly outside appropriate question processes.

The Speaker: This is a relatively straightforward matter, and we can clarify it very quickly, I believe. In actual fact, you are both right to an extent. I note on page 506 that questions can be posed to a committee chair, as was explained by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, and it gives examples of what may or may not be appropriate in that regard. I'll just note that for the record.

However, there is also a notation in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 506, which I might refer you all to, where under footnote 90 it states the following:

See also *Debates*, February 8, 2008, p. 2834 where a question was addressed to the Chair of a standing committee who [in that case] was an opposition Member. During one Question Period in 2008, opposition Members twice addressed questions to the Chair of a standing committee and the Government House Leader responded. The following day, the Liberal House Leader rose on a point of order and asked the Speaker if someone other than the Chair of a committee could respond to a question concerning the agenda of a committee. The Speaker advised that his role is to "take a look at those who are standing to answer and choose who is going to answer". He indicated that he had recognized the Government House Leader because he was the only Member rising to respond (*Debates*, February 7, 2008, p. 2743; February 8, 2008, pp. 2835-7).

As such, there is no point of order there, but it's a good point of clarification. Thank you to both members for participating in that exchange.

Let's go on to the second point of order. I believe it was raised by the Member for Airdrie.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is referring to section 13(2) of the standing orders. I understand completely, as is your purview and as is appropriate, that you are trying to keep honour and decorum in this House, and good on you for doing so. I'm referring in this instance to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, who referred to a piece of government legislation that's currently in place as a "piece of junk." I've looked through *Beauchesne's*, the Standing Orders. I cannot find anywhere where criticizing a piece of government legislation, referring to it as a piece of junk, is out of order. I just would like to understand. Please instruct us on how we as members can criticize legislation of the government appropriately. If we want to refer to it as incorrect or junk, I think that's our purview, and I don't see any precedent in the orders or any book that says that we can't refer to government legislation as a piece of junk.

The Speaker: Thank you. I'm more than happy to instruct in this regard. I'm going to take a few minutes to do this, and I hope I will have everyone's rapt attention. The part that caught my attention was when the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills said – I could stand corrected if the Blues come out differently in *Hansard*, but here's what I have from the Blues from the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. He says:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an MLA has been found to be in direct violation of the Conflicts of Interest Act legislation six times and lobbied on an issue that would benefit him personally, is it not clear that this piece of junk ethics legislation only serves to protect the Premier and her own MLAs?

Now, the words uttered one day in a particular context may or may not be parliamentary. They may or may not be unparliamentary. It depends on things I have reminded you of before and I'm going to be very happy to remind you all of yet again.

I'm going to go to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 618, line 2, where it says some wonderful things. With respect to the title, Unparliamentary Language, where this is found, line 2 talks about "offensive, provocative or threatening language" and so on. Let me quote to you that passage.

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden.

It goes on to talk about personal attacks, which was not the case here.

However, it then goes on in the second paragraph to say:

If language used in debate appears questionable to the Speaker, he or she will intervene.

And it goes on to say:

However, the Speaker may address a matter of unparliamentary language at once if he or she believes the matter to be sufficiently serious to merit immediate attention,

which I certainly did.

Normally, the matter is dealt with at the conclusion of Question Period. Since the Speaker must rule on the basis of the context in which the language was used, points of order raised in regard to questionable language must be raised as soon as possible after the alleged irregularity has occurred.

Let me go on to page 619, where it further states:

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words at issue were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber. Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day.

And it goes on to talk a little bit more about that.

Now, I indicated very shortly thereafter that I thought, hon. members, that the use of the term "junk legislation" was offensive to the proprieties of this House, would be offensive if it was used against any one of the members of government or opposition; it matters not one iota to me. It is offensive. I found it to be rude, inappropriate. It did cause some disorder, and now it's causing us to take up additional time.

3:50

So I would ask all hon. members, not just this one – I know you spend time crafting your questions; you don't oftentimes stand in here and wing them – to please review what you're saying and, furthermore, the manner and the tone and the timbre with which you intend to deliver it and the intention behind it. You may disagree with legislation. You may disagree with the ethics report. You may disagree with your own colleagues or your own caucus. That's up to you. But how you do it, and when you bring it into this House, for heaven's sake, let us all strive to present it in a manner that does not violate the tradition for which we were all standing here a year and a half ago and pledging we would uphold.

In my view, operating within the confines of what I just read to you from House of Commons procedure, I interjected on that basis. I will not stand here and allow that kind of disorder and disruption to be created in reference to anyone's particular bill or motion. It's simply inappropriate. As such, I hope that clarifies that matter, and I hope we won't see a repeat of that.

Let us move on to item 3. It is a point of order. I think it was the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Point of Order

Factual Accuracy

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I refer to Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically the first of two. The first one is regarding the comments by the Deputy Premier – is he the Deputy Premier still? Yeah, I think he might be. Who knows, eh? The Deputy Premier commented that the Wildrose is proposing that we don't build anything anymore. Again, I guess maybe this is a point of clarification.

It's certainly not a truthful statement. We obviously have tabled a plan in this Legislature. Our 10-year capital plan said that if in government this year we would spend just over \$4 billion on infrastructure, which is roughly a billion dollars less than the government over there. Indeed, it would be correct to say that we would spend a billion dollars less on infrastructure this year, but to say that we would spend nothing, of course, is untrue.

Would you like me to move to the second one, too, and get them over with in one shot?

The Speaker: Well, let's deal with this one and see where it goes.

Mr. Anderson: I would ask him to withdraw that. Thank you.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't preamble my comments with snide remarks like the Member for Airdrie has.

You can rewrite your policies, but you cannot change your personality or your character. I have merely pointed out to the member the contrast and the juxtaposition between the rather eloquent speech delivered by the leader of the Wildrose in which she tried to equate hope to debt and how she firmly believes that this government should not be borrowing money, should not be leveraging money, should not be entering into alternative financing arrangements on construction of schools. [interjection] As you can see, Mr. Speaker, my interpretation is correct because they are applauding that.

We shouldn't be doing any of that. We shouldn't then by de facto be building all the schools that we're building. We shouldn't by de facto be building all the seniors' homes that we're building. We shouldn't by de facto, Mr. Speaker, be building all the hospitals that we're building. We shouldn't be building laboratories, university buildings – and the list goes on and on – to the extent that we're building. We all know and Albertans are quite astute in knowing that if we were to build only what we can pay for, cash up front, like they would like us to do, we would be building merely a fraction of what it is that Albertans want us to build.

Mr. Speaker, we know that they want us to build schools for kids today, not in 30 years, hospitals for patients today, not in 30 years, and seniors' homes for our seniors while they are still alive, not for the next generation of seniors. So the juxtaposition between the leader's speech and then the whole list of requests for additional infrastructure was so stark that it would be difficult for one not to point that out. I have nothing to apologize for and nothing to withdraw.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I don't see any others who wish to speak, so let me comment on this matter. I believe the hon. Member for Airdrie was correct when he started out by saying this may be a point of clarification.

Having reviewed the Blues, unless I'm missing something, I would certainly agree with you in the surmising that you did.

In fact, the Deputy Premier in response to a question at approximately 2:37 or 2:38 this afternoon, a question posed by I think it was Chestermere-Rocky View, according to the Blues said the following:

Mr. Speaker, in answering this question, I'll strongly recommend that this member pick up his leader's speech of this morning and try to correlate his request for additional schools, for additional trailers with her promise of not having any more debt and extinguishing Albertans' debt. You can't have both. This government has made a promise to deliver, to build for the growth in this province, to provide children with classrooms, to provide seniors with housing, to provide patients with hospital space, not based on the notes from the leader of extinguishing hope and not building anymore and not to incur any debt, as she tends to call it. Get your story straight.

He stopped there, and the point of order was thereafter issued.

I think that we would all understand that there are oftentimes different interpretations of what we all say or what we all mean and what we all do. This would be one of those cases in my opinion. I believe both sides have had a chance to clarify their comments, and undoubtedly there may be further opportunities coming up shortly. So I do not find there to be a point of order this time, but it is a good point of clarification.

Point 4. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Point of Order

Factual Accuracy

Mr. Anderson: Also 23(h), (i), and (j), Mr. Speaker, referring to the Justice minister's inaccurate comment that the Leader of the Official Opposition in her comments in her response to the Premier's ministerial statement about the floods did not thank the police. That is inaccurate. She did. It's clearly in the statement, third paragraph, fifth or sixth word. So, sorry, you're going to have to withdraw that because you've misled the House in that regard.

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, misleading the House is a very serious allegation. I know this member in his vast legal practice knows this. First off, I refer you to *Beauchesne's* 319, which indicates that promptness is necessary in making a point of order. This point of order was not made until the next group of questions.

More importantly, my comment was that the Leader of the Opposition didn't say RCMP. She did not. She referenced first responders, she referenced police, and that's great. I'm very happy that she is onside with everyone because that's not a partisan issue. But she didn't say the RCMP. My point was that the RCMP deserve our thanks. People may want to run and hide from things that they have said or haven't said, but I bring this up to you, an old legal maxim, Mr. Speaker: truth is an absolute defence. If I misheard – I don't think I did because I've talked to four other members, and they did not hear the word "RCMP." I'd be very happy if she had said RCMP because we do owe them a debt of gratitude.

The Speaker: Is there anybody else on this point?

Well, this is an interesting notation here. I believe that there's an issue here about the facts which aren't all at the Speaker's disposal, so in fact this may wind up being a matter of a dispute between two members or two caucuses or two parties or whatever you want to call it with regard to the facts. But there's an interesting twist here, and the twist is that you may or may not make a comment on what someone did or didn't say. The twist is

that it's a little bit unusual in that sometimes you can say something by saying a member didn't say something. You can infer something, and I think that's sort of at the heart of what is being driven at here by the Member for Airdrie.

Let me go into what was said here by the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General at 2:52, who was responding to a question, I believe, from Livingstone-Macleod who had asked – was it Livingstone-Macleod? I don't have the question, but I do have the answer which prompted the point of order. The Minister of Justice said this.

Well, Mr. Speaker, my department has advised me today that approximately 95 per cent of the firearms that were stored actually have been returned. It's over 500 that have been collected and returned. On top of that, the RCMP executed 600 rooftop rescues and saved 650 pets. This government is proud to stand up for the RCMP, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who didn't even thank the RCMP today in her statement.

On reflection, one would look at this and perhaps some will read into it that someone doesn't like the RCMP, which I'm sure is not the case.

4:00

I could go on and explain more. But I think we need to be very careful about such statements, and I say this in this instance to the Minister of Justice. What a member does not say doesn't necessarily and shouldn't necessarily lead us to the conclusion by innuendo or otherwise that that person doesn't support what was intended. We all have limited speaking times in this House, we all are bound by those rules, and sometimes you can't just cover every single point or thank every single person that you would like to. I would like to feel, think, and believe that that is what the Leader of the Official Opposition might have had in mind. I don't know what she had in mind, but I would like to think that that was probably the case.

Let's leave that as a point of clarification for today, but let us all be reminded to again be very careful, particularly when you're winging a question or winging an answer or winging a point in debate. We can sometimes get caught up with ourselves. All of us have done it, and if you haven't yet, I assure you that before your term is done, you probably will as well.

So let's be very careful, and on that note let's conclude this issue and move on.

Request for Emergency Debate

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a Standing Order 30, and I'm going to ask the Member for Edmonton-Calder to please lead off in that regard. Remember, we're now talking about the urgency.

Home Care Services

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the motion has been circulated. It reads, in essence, as follows:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the negative impacts on patient care and safety resulting from Alberta Health Services' decision in June 2013 to significantly reduce the number of home-care providers in Edmonton and Calgary by cancelling contracts with existing providers and awarding multimillion-dollar, multiyear contracts to for-profit corporations.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will argue the urgency of this situation, the fact that this is the first and only opportunity to debate, the fact of the genuine nature of the emergency, the fact that this is a concern

throughout the province, that this SO 30 is in the public interest, that it is a very specific question, that it talks about administrative competence, and that it will hopefully be the general wish of this House to debate further this afternoon.

On the first point of urgency, Mr. Speaker, this is in reference to Standing Orders 30(1) and 30(7) as well as from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* from page 689, from *Beauchesne's* paragraph 390, and from the *Hansard* of your own words on March 14 of this year talking about the fundamental question of urgency.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the ramifications and the repercussions for patient care and safety continue to be felt to this day from this decision to corporatize our home care here in the Edmonton area especially. This initial decision may have been taken on May 31, but new impacts have unfolded every month since, right up to this present day. The latest development of note was the fact that one of these corporate contract holders, Revera, gave up part of their contract in southwest Edmonton because they could not meet patient needs. I would suggest that Revera at least had the guts to realize and to know that their contract was untenable. Probably many others of these corporate contracts are untenable, too.

A matter of urgent debate today are the negative impacts on patient care and safety as a result of the series of decisions taken by this government and various corporations. Mr. Speaker, this is the first and only opportunity to debate this. Again, I'm referring to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* page 693 and *Beauchesne's* paragraph 387. We all know that this House did adjourn on May 15 and that no item on the agenda now is to deal with this issue. The Order Paper does not contain a government bill, a member's bill, or a motion to address this issue. Question period, I think, is clearly not a place to permit a fulsome and substantive debate on this very important concern. An emergency motion thus is the only mechanism that I see available.

Further to that, the fact is that this is a genuine emergency, as referenced by Standing Order 30(7)(a) and *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on pages 689, 693, and 695, which I think clearly open up the idea that this is a genuine emergency for over 6,000 home-care clients in Edmonton and in Calgary who transitioned from one provider to another provider over the past several months. They have experienced – and we all have had examples of this come to our constituency offices and to the minister's office – missed and delayed visits, disruption in care and routine, and disruption in the relationship with the care provider, which is very considerable. The fact is that they've now ended up with staff without experience or knowledge of the specific needs of home-care patients. In fact, Mr. Speaker, companies readily admit that they could not meet the needs of the patients and the requirements of the contract. I find this very disturbing to hear from the corporate side as well.

It's an emergency for staff in regard to underpay and overwork. Hundreds have been forced to leave their employment with nonprofit co-operatives and work to gain employment with non-unionized corporate providers. This is in fact an emergency for families as well. They can't count on the system to deliver the care that their loved ones need, and many have had to step in and provide care themselves or through the family, causing great inconvenience and compromising the health of patients.

Mr. Speaker, this is a concern throughout Alberta, as referenced in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* pages 690 and 694. Certainly, this is taking place in Edmonton, it's taking place in Strathcona, in Calgary. And I would venture to say that the fact that there's an intention to expand the same failed model of corporatization of home care in the Lethbridge and Medicine Hat

areas also, I think, adds to the urgency of this debate, that in fact we need to put a stop or some modification to this immediately.

Mr. Speaker, this emergency submission of mine is certainly in the public interest, as referenced from *Beauchesne's* 389 and 390, just talking about the public interest demands that we address patient concern about care and safety, of which this is self-evident. The Health minister himself has called this whole thing a failure, yet we've not done anything to address that failure. Days go by, and people are still in the same compromised situations. New revelations are appearing every month about problems with care. If we don't take the time to debate what is happening in the home-care system, the public interest does in fact suffer.

We also must maintain the legitimacy of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and not do a disservice to the authority of this institution that provides public health care to Albertans. We cannot neglect our duty as representatives to debate and reflect on this most important issue of the day.

I have, of course, referenced this into a very specific question, as stated in *Beauchesne's* paragraph 387 and in the description of a SO 30 as well. I'm stating a specific question, which is in essence the negative impact on patient care and safety right here and right now.

4:10

A couple of final things, Mr. Speaker, in regard to administrative competence. This government is responsible for our public health system and must be held accountable. We cannot defer or put layers of excuses between that responsibility, and giving these corporate contracts away does not diminish that responsibility. As well, this debate is necessary to achieve a better understanding of what went wrong, where mistakes were made, so that we might be able to minimize negative impacts and, as I say, to seek better resolution in the future, when we might seek modification of home care in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat and other places in the province.

Finally, number eight, that there is a general wish for debate in this House. I trust that we might find that wish amongst a majority of members here today. Certainly, many of us have had to deal with this. In my experience there's been an unprecedented amount of anecdotal evidence that would suggest that our home care in the Edmonton area is in a state of failure. We have many, many, many people not getting the care that they had before. I think this opens the door to more private home care, which I suspect is part of the reason that this did in fact happen in the first place. When you have somebody you look after and you need to care for and that has to happen tomorrow, not next month or in February, when the Health Quality Council comes through, then you just buy that service.

I think that Albertans expect better, that we need public delivery of our home care, and that we do not need to wait another four months for another inquiry. The last inquiry did not satisfy any of the immediate concerns that I have here today, and I think it's the duty and the responsibility of this House to deal with this this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and to speak to the motion under Standing Order 30. After consideration of the arguments I'm going to present, my request will be that you not allow this motion to proceed, and there are a number of reasons for that. Of course, I will attempt to confine my comments specifically to the question

of urgency that you pointed out prior to the motion being introduced.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would draw hon. members' attention to the motion itself. I would assume that for a motion of this nature to be considered, it needs to be factually correct in order to meet the test of being considered an urgent issue of public interest.

The motion refers in its last sentence to

the negative impacts on patient care and safety resulting from Alberta Health Services' decision in June 2013 to significantly reduce the number of home-care providers in Edmonton and Calgary by cancelling contracts with existing providers and awarding multimillion-dollar, multiyear contracts to for-profit corporations.

Mr. Speaker, in the first instance, the hon. member proposing the motion has stated something that is not an accurate representation of the facts. The contracts that preceded the ones that are in place today were in fact not cancelled by Alberta Health Services. These were contracts that expired. They were term-limited contracts, as are many of the contracts that Alberta Health Services enters into in order to provide us with health care services. In fact, these contracts expired some time ago, and it was as long ago as February 2013 that Alberta Health Services issued a request for proposals to which all of the previous providers were free to apply and new providers who had not provided home-care services up to that point in time were also free to apply.

Mr. Speaker, what's referred to here as a deliberate action to cancel the provision of home-care services by certain providers is not that. In fact, the events that took place follow the normal course of business in Alberta Health Services in the delivery of care. So I would offer that as a first argument as to some of the factual inaccuracies contained in the motion.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I'd respectfully point out that the motion implies, at least as I read it, that contracts were awarded to for-profit corporations solely and for the first time. Of course, many hon. members will be aware that Alberta through its service delivery model has worked collaboratively and entered into contracts with public providers, not-for-profit providers, and for-profit providers for the provision not only of home-care services but many other services that we offer in our health care system.

To attempt to make part of the argument for an urgent debate the basis that, at least, as I said, in my reading of this, we are somehow newly entering into contracts with for-profit providers for the provision of home care is factually inaccurate. Those two points taken together, Mr. Speaker, would provide me with a basis to respectfully ask in the first instance that this motion not be allowed to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, the other evidence that was presented by the hon. member: I take issue with a number of those arguments as well as they pertain to the urgency, the request for this debate on a matter of urgency, and specifically with respect to the argument presented that this House has not had an opportunity and will not have another opportunity to debate this issue.

As I just pointed out, Mr. Speaker, the previous contracts for home-care services that were held by Alberta Health Services with a number of providers expired sometime ago. The expiration of those contracts prompted the issuance of a request for proposal. That is a public process as are all procurement processes that are undertaken by Alberta Health Services or by government itself. The fact was well known as long ago as February of 2013 that those contracts had expired, that there would be an RFP process, and that in all possibility home-care providers could change, could be realigned.

As we all know, and as the hon. member pointed out in his remarks, AHS was clear that there were two goals with respect to

the RFP process. There was an objective to reduce the total number of providers in Alberta. Secondly, and I think most importantly, the other goal of the RFP process was to ensure a more consistent level of service across the province to all citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that this was not a cancellation of contracts, that it was in fact a normal business process, that it was a public process and the fact that the hon. member and all other members of this House either were aware that or had the ability to be aware that former home-care contracts had expired gave everyone in this House the opportunity to raise questions about that process. Whether the concern was, as it appears to be on the part of the hon. member, with the provision of these services by for-profit providers or whether the concern was with other aspects of the RFP or the delivery of home care generally, the opportunity to present those arguments existed as long ago as February 2013.

As well, Mr. Speaker, since that time we had the opportunity as members to talk about health care issues, including home care, in the spring session of this House. Members had the opportunity to raise questions if they were concerned with the procurement practices. There were opportunities in Public Accounts, where both Alberta Health Services and my department appear on a regular basis, and, of course, up to the end of the spring session. So to suggest in any way that there was not an opportunity for this matter to be considered earlier is simply not accurate.

Finally, Mr. Speaker – and I'll be very brief on this – again sticking to the question of urgency, the hon. member in his remarks implied that none of the concerns since contracts have been awarded have in fact been addressed and that that contributes to the emergency nature of the debate which he's requesting. As most of us, I think, are aware, Janet Davidson, at the time the official administrator of Alberta Health Services, conducted an extensive review of the RFP process. Alberta Health Services made her report public. The conclusions of the report are perhaps not germane to the question of urgency, Mr. Speaker, but there was a very thorough and a very publicly visible exercise to review the RFP process. I'll note that it did result in some changes to the awarding of contracts, changes that were inspired by the desire to maintain the highest possible level of quality.

4:20

Again, to the hon. member's comments most recently about the decision of one of the providers to reduce the number of home-care clients that that provider would serve, Mr. Speaker, that situation was well publicized. The process was not an emergency as the hon. member would suggest. In fact, I don't remember at any time describing the entire exercise as a failure. What we did discuss at length and in the public realm was the work that was done by both AHS and this particular provider to identify areas where it may not be able to deliver the level of quality that is expected.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing I'd point to is again on the question of urgency. The hon. member is citing patient safety and quality and his concerns about those as the basis for an emergency debate. If the hon. member doesn't know – and I'm sure most would agree that he should know it – in fact, Alberta's continuing care health service standards apply to the provision of all home-care services in our province. Whether the contract is with a private provider, a for-profit provider, or a public provider, the standards are the same for all.

As he mentioned, I've asked the Health Quality Council not to conduct a review of the contracts for private providers but to review and to make recommendations to update the quality assurance framework for home care in this province. That report is coming in February. But by no means, Mr. Speaker, does the

existence of that review suggest at all that patient safety and quality of home care are in question in this province.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully submit that this motion, first of all, factually does not represent accurately the circumstances surrounding the provision of home care in this province and, secondly, that it does not meet the required test of urgency nor does it answer the fact that there have been ample opportunities for members of this House to debate this issue in multiple forums as long ago as February 2013.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Calder for bringing this emergency motion forward. Under Standing Order 30(7) there are six conditions a motion must meet. Clauses (b) through (f) are pretty straightforward. As far as I can tell, there is no debate on whether this motion meets them. It does. It comes down only to meeting the first requirement; namely, that “the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration.” As I will explain, the failure to deliver care that has arisen by the government’s decision has already generated an emergency that this House must address urgently.

When people receive home-care services, it’s not because they simply want them. People receive home care because, quite frankly, they’re not able to provide their own services in their own home by themselves. So when stories emerge of missed appointments, it’s not just a bad-news day; it’s a failure to provide the necessities of life. This government was warned repeatedly that centralizing so many home-care providers in such a short period of time was not just unwise but, frankly, was dangerous. Sadly, the government did not heed this warning, and some of the most vulnerable people in our province are now paying that price.

Mr. Speaker, this is an emergency requiring immediate debate because the government’s actions are seriously endangering people. They may try to say that the problems are limited to one single home-care provider, but the stories that I’m about to tell you show that that’s simply not the case. The Minister of Health would have us believe that this was limited to one company by the name of Revera; however, that’s not realistic because we’ve seen story after story about We Care, CBI, and many others.

On October 10, 2013, the Health minister stated that he regrets the inconvenience caused by service disruptions to 300 home-care patients in Edmonton. In Edmonton the system failed, said the Minister of Health, adding that Alberta Health Services’ apology earlier that day for the disruptions was appropriate and that he holds them responsible. One has to wonder what Alberta Health Services was doing in all of these conversations they were having if they couldn’t see this coming down the track.

If we go even further, we know the story of the Edmonton woman who was left alone on the floor of her seniors’ residence for nine hours after her home-care worker did not show up. She’s 87 and has lung cancer and failing eyesight. Her health care worker was from CBI Home Health. Over the Labour Day weekend she failed to show. That 87-year-old woman was on the floor. She yelled a few times, she couldn’t move, and she didn’t know what she was going to do. Her family, her friends checked on her the next day. Her daughter said: when I saw my mother on the floor all soiled, I started to cry because I thought how undignified it was for this poor lady to have to be in her soiled clothing all that time. One would say that if that doesn’t sound to you like it’s an urgent need or an emergency, then I wonder what

is. This woman’s experience illustrates that the province’s process of selecting a new agency to provide home care earlier this year was flawed right from the start.

I know the Health minister would have us believe that everybody had lots of time and everybody participated. However, even their own report, that was posted by AHS, showed that agencies competing for home-care contracts complained about a lack of transparency in the selection process. If the Health minister would have us believe that these companies all had fair access but the companies are telling you that there was a lack of transparency in the process, then clearly this was not an open and transparent process. Now we have a very serious and dangerous problem facing our vulnerable Albertans in this province. Even AHS spokesperson Carol Anderson said that missed visits by home-care providers are an issue.

Mr. Speaker, Cam Tait, who many of us know, from Creekside co-op was told by the Premier that these issues would be addressed many months ago. He blogged about some of the shocking and the extremely sad situations that home-care patients were forced into. One of the things he said was that “more than 30 people scheduled for home care services in Leduc did not have their shifts covered” just in September. And that was from We Care. The situation at the Leduc centre was posted online. Previous staff at We Care said that this never used to be a problem, but because of the shift to the way the government wanted to go, forcing them to take on so many clients in so little time, they did not have enough staff.

One of their regular clients recently went an entire weekend without getting help for a bowel routine. Now, I don’t know if many of you know what a bowel routine is, and I’m sure not going to go into too much detail because it’s not very pretty, but as somebody who was a caregiver, I can tell you that my brother had a bowel routine, and when you go a whole weekend without having somebody assist you with removing necessary bodily fluids from your skin, from your body, that is an emergency, and that is urgent.

Mr. Tait goes on to say:

“Because she went all weekend without [a bowel routine] she became very incontinent in her bed and she was deeply embarrassed. Poor woman.”

The blog goes on about:

the mental anguish of people with disability being uncertain of personal care attendants not coming. Wondering if you will get help or not can grind a person down. It can dampen one’s confidence to live in the community . . . independently. The sad thing here is the provincial government is not paying much respect to personal care attendants.

It goes on to say:

“AHS needs to understand the rights of the ones who are disabled and or elderly. I help people with their daily living. I hope I give them dignity and self-respect . . . People that are going through issues, whether it’s having a hard time growing old and all the complications that go with it. Or, ones suffering from disabilities and all the things they go through in a daily manner” [deserve respect].

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Health minister tells us that there was a review done on this exact issue way back in July. He mentioned Janet Davidson, who did that review. One can only imagine that either the review was done inadequately, or it wasn’t done at all. These care providers have been telling this government, have been telling opposition, have been writing letters, and have been in the media saying that the problems with home care are rampant and that going from 35 providers to 10 providers was going to be dangerous and cause serious issues for people receiving that care.

Mr. Speaker, these people cannot afford to wait for the government to come back with yet another report on home-care services next year. They cannot afford to have another six months of missed appointments. They cannot afford to spend one minute, one hour, one day, or one weekend sitting in their own waste. These are vulnerable Albertans not getting the care they need from the government.

4:30

Now, I understand that the Minister of Health doesn't want to talk about this. I understand that the Minister of Health finds this conversation a bit uncomfortable. I also understand that even the Minister of Health knows that in Edmonton especially and in Calgary this process is failing Albertans and putting them in a dangerous situation. I would suggest to all members of this House that it's not an Edmonton or Calgary issue, folks. It's going to happen in Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Balzac, Innisfail, Trochu, Fort McMurray, and many other places across this province.

It is the agenda of this government to roll out centralized home care. Many of your constituents may just be calling you and explaining to you that their home-care worker did not show up to give them a bath for a month. We thought a bath a week was terrible. Imagine going without a bath for a month.

When you sit there and you actually put it into perspective, there is absolutely no harm in having this debate today. If anything, we would be doing our jobs today as legislators to understand that any time we leave a vulnerable Albertan laying on the floor and we don't address it in this House at the first opportunity – that is our job. That's why our constituents put us here, and it's our job to fight for every single Albertan in this province who can't be heard. I implore each and every one of you to put the party lines aside and have an emergency debate on home care.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in support of this motion for emergency debate on home care services and how they have been co-opted by an agenda that is driven largely by ideology and by a budget problem that this government has gotten itself into. It's hard to view this in any other way when so much has happened since the deficit budget was tabled in this House. Indeed, there has not been adequate discussion and debate in this House on the progressive privatization of our health care system by stealth.

This government reassured the entire electorate before the last election that they had no interest in privatizing health care. That is exactly what they've been doing for the last year and a half. Not only are there now boutique clinics for those who can afford special treatment, but there's private wait-list insurance. No, you can't jump the queue in Alberta, but you can pay \$50 a month and go to Vancouver and jump their queue or go to Toronto and jump their queue. This is privatization and queue-jumping by stealth, and this government has taken no initiative. It has obviously had this agenda since Ralph Klein was here. I've watched it evolve over 12 years.

There is no hiding the fact that it's time to have a public debate about why this government continues to privatize health care without acknowledging it and without public debate. These two values of the Progressive Conservative Party, none of them overtly expressed – one based on support for private, two-tiered health care and the second based on the terror of showing

themselves to have a budget deficit and an unwillingness to look at a fair tax system in this province – have left them with no options. They're simply going ahead and privatizing our health care system under our noses, and it's taking this kind of underhanded approach to make it impossible for Albertans or even the Legislature to have an honest debate about where the health care system is going.

Is it urgent, Mr. Speaker, to debate home care? Well, it depends on where you sit. Where the minister sits, there's nothing urgent about home care. He sits in a very comfortable spot as Minister of Health in his own home, in his own community. Is it urgent for many people in this Legislature? No, it's not urgent for any of us unless we have loved ones that are being dismissed, not visited appropriately, not getting the quality of care they deserve, and not identified as appropriate for home care at all because of the shortage of home-care services. It depends on where you stand, whether this is urgent or not.

We are progressively losing the public health care system that we have all supported over decades in this country, and this government is leading the charge in Canada to privatize our health care right under our noses. No, it's not violating the letter of the Canada Health Act; it's violating the very fundamental spirit of the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Speaker, the privatization of home care that has significantly happened over this past year is consistent with now the move to privatize laboratories after a totally failed experiment in the '90s, in which the government had to buy back the laboratories in Calgary, Calgary Lab Services, because they were losing 30 per cent – 30 per cent – more on lab service than they had before. So we spent millions and millions buying back the lab service after a failed experiment in privatization in Calgary. Now they're doing it in Edmonton and saying: "No, no. We're not privatizing anything." This is all about smoke and mirrors, Mr. Speaker.

Private home care will do several things to home care. It will weaken the standards, notwithstanding this minister's last-minute appeal to the Health Quality Council to ensure that we have those standards in home care. Where is the monitoring? Where is the enforcement in our long-term care centres now? Now he's going to add another layer, ostensibly, of monitoring and enforcement of standards in home care. We already hear stories of people, especially new Canadians, being taken off the street and trained in the homes of people to do the home-care services without appropriate standards, without appropriate care, and in many cases with serious consequences such that either the families themselves step in and boot out the home-care service or they somehow endure half the quality in home-care services that they need.

It means a high turnover rate in home-care staff. It means less income for home-care staff. We've already heard many who are not getting travel expenses as a result of this new privatization. Their salaries are decreased. Their security, their pension funds, all kinds of benefits that were there before are now in question. This is going to create another level of instability in a health system that is longing for some stability, longing for some commitment, longing for leadership, and they're not getting it from this minister. It's one after the other of chaos, poor decisions, reversal of decisions, firing and hiring.

It's clear that this government doesn't know where it's going in health care, and the health care professionals tell me on a daily basis that the morale is continuing to slide into the basement. This is unacceptable. If there's ever a time to debate our creeping privatizing, now overt privatization, it's here in this House now. Have the courage, Mr. Minister, to stand up here and defend what you're doing in the health care system today.

The quality, the access, and the affordability of our health care system all have been shown in studies to be worsening under a private-option health care. What do insurance companies do for health care? Tell me, do you see any benefits by adding a middle man between the patient and the doctor? How do we deal with double-dipping, doctors who bill both the public and the private system? How do we deal with cherry-picking, companies that decide, “Oh, we won’t take you because you’re too complicated; you’re going to cost too much”? I don’t see any ability to deal with that.

I think we need to stand up and have this debate and ensure that we don’t make another botched-up job of change in this province when there’s already so much demoralization in the health care system with all the changes that continue to be made. Show some consistency, some leadership, and have the courage to debate these issues.

With a high turnover in home care we’re going to get a progressive loss in quality of care in home care. When you have many people that are coming in and out of home care because they’re not happy with the work, they’re dissatisfied with the quality they can give, they’re rushing around from place to place, not getting the appropriate financial support or moral support – in many cases I know the home-care providers of the past. They’re largely a voluntary organization. They support one another. They’re there because they love their work, they care for people, and they want to be consistently there, week after week, month after month, especially in the last years of life for these people. You’re going to disrupt all of that again.

Surely you can see what a cost this is, not a monetary cost. I’m talking about a human cost and a spiritual cost. This is another example of a government that simply does not know where it’s going in health care, except that it wants to privatize, and it wants to balance its budget.

It’s time to debate, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

The Speaker: Are there others? Calgary-Fort, your side has already spoken, but if you have something very brief that’s different from what we’ve heard, please proceed quickly.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join in here on the notion of emergency and the opportunity to debate. In fact, every day we have about a hundred Albertans become seniors, and planning ahead, we know that there are about half a million seniors today, but in 20 years it will be 1 million. So these data have been collected, and we have planned to address that. Of those half a million Albertans today 100,000 receive assistance and care in the comfort of their own homes. Personally, I have visited the care centres. In fact, the Associate Minister of Seniors was with me in my riding, and we visited a few seniors’ homes with home care. We found that this thing is working as it is.

The population is increasing, and I note that since 2009 the funding for home care has increased by 33 per cent. We are now spending \$507 million, more than half a billion dollars, I should say, to ensure that Albertans receive the best care possible in their own home.

Now, I just want to emphasize that those are the efforts that our government is doing, and it’s going well out there. Also, AHS has an organization that provides health care, and to me everything is going – of course, there are problems, cases, individual issues, accidents. It happens, but to me that’s part of the operational. We look at the big picture. Things are moving, I feel, and my constituents acknowledge that when I visit newly built home care.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: I think we’re going to have to stop there and deal with this matter. Oh, where to begin. Hon. members, this is a very difficult issue as much for the chair as it is for all of you, including everyone who has already spoken. Nonetheless, Standing Order 30 does provide that “the Member may briefly state the arguments in favour of the request for leave and the Speaker may allow such debate as he . . . considers relevant to the question of urgency” and that it is the role of the chair to “rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order.”

The most awkward thing about a Standing Order 30, regardless of the subject matter, is to understand the term “urgency.” The term “urgency” as we use it in normal day-to-day parlance is completely different than the way it is used here under Standing Order 30. I have wrestled with this for two decades. Let me just remind you of what *Beauchesne’s Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, says on page 113, and this is in the context of motions to adjourn the House under Standing Order 52 to discuss an important matter. In this instance for Standing Order 52 you can substitute our local Assembly’s Standing Order 30. I’ll quote *Beauchesne* 390.

‘Urgency’ within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but means ‘urgency of debate’, when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is as succinct a definition of urgency with respect to Standing Order 30 as we can find for you right at this moment. I would ask you to reflect on it because it’s a difficult one for people who are not in this Assembly and have not experienced this kind of debate to fully grasp and understand. There’s no question in anyone’s mind in this Assembly – and certainly there’s no question in the Speaker’s mind either – whether or not home care is important or, for that matter, that any aspect of health care delivery is important. Clearly, it is.

In any event, I have listened carefully and very attentively to comments made by the five members who spoke in request to this request for leave to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly. I am prepared to rule, as a result, on whether the request for leave for this motion to proceed is in order under Standing Order 30. The Member for Edmonton-Calder did meet the requirement of providing at least two hours’ notice to the Speaker’s office. He provided the required notice at 10:38 a.m. today. His motion reads as follows.

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the negative impacts on patient care and safety resulting from Alberta Health Services’ decision in June 2013 to significantly reduce the number of home care providers in Edmonton and Calgary by cancelling contracts with existing providers and awarding multimillion-dollar, multiyear contracts to for-profit corporations.

Now, I’m not going to comment on the wording used in the motion. That is up to the member to explain, and he has done so. However, members will recall that the relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject are also included in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on pages 689 through 696. I’ve already cited the *Beauchesne* reference.

Now, in listening to the hon. member who proposed the motion and to others who commented on it, I’m sure you would all agree that I did allow considerable latitude. Members who have been here for several SO 30s know that I and previous Speakers have interjected very quickly on matters that strayed from the points about urgency of debate. Today, however, I allowed a little bit more to go on because I recognize how serious the issue is, I

recognize that this is our first day back, but I also recognize that when this issue arose, some immediate action was in fact taken.

Now, I listened very attentively to all the speakers. In fact, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder rose at approximately 4:02 and concluded his remarks just before 4:13. Then the Minister of Health spoke from the government side from 4:13 to approximately 4:23. Coincidentally, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake rose at 4:23 and spoke until 4:33. Quadruply coincidentally, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View rose at 4:33 and spoke until approximately 4:43. So we've had 10, 20, 30, 40 good minutes, which were then augmented with two or three minutes from Calgary-Fort, and a number of important points were made even though they weren't necessarily germane to the issue of urgency as defined by *Beauchesne* and HOC, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. But I did let points get said and get made so that we would get the full grasp and gravity from all four parties of the importance of this matter.

Now, before the question as to whether this motion should proceed to be put to the Assembly, I have to determine where the motion meets the requirements of Standing Order 30(7)(a), which requires that "the matter proposed for discussion [is related] to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." As I've said, there's no question that the matter, the issue, is important and, in the mind of anyone who spoke on either side of it, constitutes some form of genuine emergent response or emergency action.

4:50

Hon. members, I want to go on briefly and just acknowledge that I have been there, and I have seen home care delivered to patients in need during my time in a particular portfolio. I know where you are all coming from because I have been there and I have seen it. I know how serious the families take this matter when one of their members winds up in a position of being, to quote the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, soiled all weekend, or words to that effect. Obviously it's serious to sit in your own waste for any seconds or minutes of time. It's awkward, uncomfortable, and ought to be corrected as quickly as possible.

I also noted other comments by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, whom I did let go on a little further than I would normally have let go on on this portion. He was into turnover rates and salaries and pension funds and creeping privatization and so on. Nonetheless, in fairness to that member and his caucus I allowed that to go on so that those comments could be on the record, which, as I had said earlier, was probably more what all of you were after at the very minimum.

I also was keen on the comments made by the hon. Minister of Health, wherein he indicated that the contracts were not cancelled, they were term-limited, they expired some time ago, an RFP was issued, there were, perhaps, some factual inaccuracies, but most importantly, that the Alberta Health Services folks and their new head, which I think he mentioned was Janet Davidson, was doing their utmost to review this and have already taken some very specific action. Clearly, it has caught the attention of the upper echelon in Alberta Health Services, and that's a very good thing.

I want to reiterate that I take this as a very serious matter. I know all of you do, too, because it affects and it impacts literally thousands of Albertans. I don't have the latest number at hand, but I would venture to guess that it's 40,000 or 50,000 or thereabouts, perhaps even more. So the gravity of the situation is certainly not lost on me.

Now, I want to also point out for members here that if I were to allow the debate to proceed for the remainder of the day, it would not culminate in a decision by this Assembly. It might point out a

direction for some people who want to take it, but it does not culminate in a decision in and of itself, so please be reminded of that.

Finally, I'll just state that while I would be very prepared to allow the debate to take place for the remaining hour, we've had about 45 minutes of what I would call debate already. All four parties are on record now stating what they wish to state and what they feel about this matter, and as such I will not rule in favour of the leave to have an emergency debate for the remaining hour.

That concludes that matter, and I would ask for your understanding and your rereview of everything that I just said so that you will be able to guide yourselves accordingly. Thank you.

Hon. members, just before we start the formal proceedings for Orders of the Day, the hon. Associate Minister of Recovery and Reconstruction for High River wishes to make a comment.

I'll recognize you, sir.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would like to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to transfer the sponsorship of Bill 206, Tobacco Reduction (Flavoured Tobacco Products) Amendment Act, 2012, to my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. minister has requested unanimous consent of the Assembly.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Excellent. We didn't hear any objection to that, so we can proceed with your request.

Thank you, hon. members, for that understanding. That has been granted. The Order Paper will now show the name of the new sponsor for this bill, and the bill will be reprinted.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[The Clerk read the following written question, which had been accepted]

Legal Actions against the Ministry of Energy

Q41. Mr. Bikman:

What are the amounts for which the Crown has settled legal actions for each fiscal year commencing April 1, 2008, and ending March 31, 2012, where the Minister or Ministry of Energy is the defendant, and what were the causes of action in those legal actions?

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're now on private members' bills, so let us continue on with the hon. Member for Red Deer-North with respect to the concurrence motion.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I know that according to the clock it's two minutes to 5. I have a 10-minute response to the concurrence motion. As well, a few other speakers will speak to it. I would ask, because I don't see any point in speaking for one minute, that we move directly to our private member's motion today rather than just speaking for a minute and then coming back to it, sir.

The Speaker: I think that would be acceptable. Hon. member, you were asking for unanimous consent? I didn't hear that.

Mrs. Jablonski: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Could you please rephrase your unanimous consent motion in its totality, then, just so we're clear?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, as it is one minute to 5, I am requesting unanimous consent to move directly to our motion for today.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Red Deer-North has requested your unanimous consent, as uttered.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: I don't believe I hear any objections, so that has been granted.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I do have 10 guests sitting in the members' gallery. If I could ask your permission to introduce them to the House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the member for Calgary-Hawkwood has requested that we revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Please proceed with your introduction, and as soon as you're finished, go on with your motion.

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to my House colleagues. It is my honour to rise to introduce you to 10 guests that are sitting in the members' gallery. They're representing members throughout the province who have under two umbrella organizations provided guidance to heritage language education in our province.

The first on the list is the Southern Alberta Heritage Language Association, or SAHLA. The next one is the International and Heritage Languages Association of Alberta, IHLA. Mr. Speaker, I would ask them to stand as I mention their name to be recognized, and we'll hold our applause until the end, when I finish introducing them.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

I have Mr. Michael Embaie, president of SAHLA; Vinay Dey, a member of SAHLA; Amina Ofleh, principal of one of the schools and also a member of SAHLA; Steven Lim, a member of SAHLA; Michael Gretton, co-ordinator of SAHLA; Josephine Pallard, president of IHLA; Leticia Cables, a member of IHLA; Vida Dreh,* a member of SAHLA; Chandra Weerasinghe, a member of SAHLA; and John Gattliak,* a member of SAHLA. I thank you so much for travelling to this corner of the province on very short notice to come to support the motion we are just about to begin.

Members of the House, if I can ask you to give them the traditional warm welcome. Thank you.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

Heritage Language Schooling

513. Mr. Luan moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to promote and assist heritage language schooling in collaboration with local school board authorities to provide adequate access to school facilities.

Mr. Luan: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to open debate on Motion 513. I'm proposing this motion in order to bring attention to the issues that heritage language schools face and how

the government can assist in promoting collaboration between heritage language schools and local school boards.

Just to give you a bit of a background, Madam Speaker, heritage language schools provide an extracurricular education environment, typically held on weekends, to individuals who wish to learn another language and increase cultural competency. These schools operate throughout the province at a community level and represent many different ethnicities.

There are two major umbrella organizations, as introduced to you earlier, SAHLA and IHLA. Both of them are nonprofit organizations. SAHLA is based in southern Alberta, and they represent over 38 different languages throughout the southern part of our province. IHLA is their counterpart. They provide guidance to critical elements in language education and represent the northern part of Alberta. Together they represent over 80 language schools across Alberta, with 12,000 students currently enrolled.

Here are some examples of language schools. The Chinese Academy in Calgary is the largest language school in Alberta. It has been in operation since 1997 and has over 1,900 students. The Russian school in Edmonton, Erudite, is an accredited heritage language private school which was founded in September 2003 and is dedicated to preserving and promoting Russian language and culture in our multicultural society. Finally, there is Gabriela Mistral Latin American School in Edmonton, which is committed to preserving the Spanish language and Latin American culture. Those are just some examples. The instruction those schools provide not only helps preserve their culture and their language but also helps open many doors for students as they either continue their education or enter into the workforce.

Madam Speaker, with all those students and the fantastic work they're doing, both SAHLA and IHLA believe there's a need for affordable rent rates for class space at weekend schools, and there need to be some resolutions to accommodate schools so that they can access school facilities. For your information, just to give you background, in Calgary in 2011 the heritage language schools paid \$67 per hour to rent a classroom on the weekend. If I sum up the total of all the language schools across the province, they provide thousands to tens of thousands of dollars for classroom rentals in order to provide educational service.

Another challenge that the heritage language schools commonly face is that they feel like they are being treated as, if I can use their terminology, secondary citizens. What this implies is that they have not been given the proper recognition that heritage language is in the domain of education. They're often referred to and mixed together with recreational groups. When they rent facilities, they are subject to all kinds of conditions, and one of the conditions is very ironic when you think of a thousand students renting schools on the weekend. If they move a table or mark something on a keyboard and on Monday the regular school gets agitated about that, if they receive three such complaints, then their lease is voided.

I personally have been involved in one of these incidents. One of the schools in Calgary has been there over 10 years, but just because of the change to a new principal, who was receiving those administrative concerns and headaches, that principal simply decided: we're not going to renew this school. Immediately thousands of students who had been using that school for weekend language education found themselves having no school. That was a time, I remember, when many of them were voicing this concern. Why are the public facilities, that they pay for in taxes, treated so differently? For instance, if for the same school Monday to Friday there is a change or closure, it normally has about six to nine months of procedures where you consult with parents and the

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

community and you do a transition in that regard, not on a whim like this one, where you could decide at any moment.

Because of all of these issues, many heritage language schools are run inconsistently, with an unstable learning environment, which creates unfavourable outcomes for language programs. As a result, this may diminish the quality of education and limit students' opportunities to learn an additional language.

Just for your information, I did a quick comparison through our research staff that compared: is this just an isolated issue, or is this across the jurisdictions? I learned that internationally many countries have created specific heritage language or, as they call it, international language legislation. Australia leads the world. They have developed very distinctive national policy for international language education, targeting emerging economies such as China and India. They simply believe that by educating their kids in those languages that emerging countries need, it will give their children added competitiveness to succeed in the global economy. In Canada, nationally, Ontario, Quebec, B.C., and Manitoba have all established similar legislation. Alberta somehow is falling behind.

With those challenges, Madam Speaker, I believe opportunities exist ahead of us. Alberta is the fastest growing province. As we just learned, it reached over 4 million in population this year. We also have very rapidly changing demographics in our province. I just reviewed the 2011 StatsCan stats. I want to share a few with you very quickly. Today 1 in 5 Canadians is a visible minority, or roughly 19 per cent of the population. One in 5 Albertans is a visible minority. One in 4 Edmontonians, or 25 per cent of Edmontonians, are a visible minority, and – listen to this – 1 in 3 Calgaryans are a visible minority.

Mr. Speaker, I remember that about seven years ago I was struck by one of the statements made by the Calgary police chief. She said at the time that 50 years ago 1 in 50 was a visible minority in Calgary, today 1 in 5. This was seven years ago. I followed her speech. I compared to the 2011 stats. We changed. From 1 in 5 seven years ago it's now 1 in 3 in Calgary. Clearly, there is a trend, and the trend continues. The diversification of Alberta is becoming a new reality in today's society.

Here I want to close by saying: what's the impact? What's the significance of me bringing this up and talking about this? Madam Speaker, I believe that we have the opportunity today to create favourable conditions for generations of Albertans to benefit from gaining a competitive edge in today's global economy. This includes that our kids will have multiple benefits for individual growth and cultural competency and have the ability to develop and maintain increased competency in listening to, speaking, reading, and writing another language.

5:10

This will also help them strengthen their cognitive development through knowledge of an additional language, help them build a bridge between Canadian and heritage cultures, and the list goes on. There's a long list of research establishing the cognitive and developmental benefits for children to have that.

More than that, I think we as a province have the opportunity to set a standard for language education in a consistent and stable learning environment, to recognize language education as a critical component of Alberta education, not just another recreational or cultural activity, and to develop a unique Alberta model that will have market-driven, cost-sharing, and joint services provided for Albertans.

I invite hon. members to have a vigorous debate and support this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good to see you back in the big chair.

I am going to rise today and speak to this motion, the motion put forward by the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood. To the member: I appreciate you bringing it forward. The member and I both sit on the Intercultural Dialogue Institute, one of the committees in Calgary trying to promote diversity and greater language use. I would be thrilled to do anything I could to support it. I do have some questions, and I'll get to them as I roll through it.

A special welcome to the guests today. I think we'd all like to see more of our kids and adults in Alberta speaking as many languages as we could. We'd all be better off.

The motion, as I read it, from the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to promote and assist heritage language schooling in collaboration with local school board authorities to provide adequate access to school facilities.

On the surface of it it certainly sounds like a terrific idea for all concerned. I think everybody in here approved the motion from the Member for Calgary-South East, now the associate minister for flood recovery, on November 19 which urged the government to construct new school facilities in collaboration with municipalities, school boards, and other stakeholders which would function as schools during the day but have the ability to offset [some of those] operational expenses by partnering with compatible public and private enterprises such as but not limited to,

as we discussed at the time,

libraries, daycares, and recreational facilities.

I am fully, as I said, supportive of the concept that a school facility should be a community hub. It seems like it's gotten much more complicated over the years, and I think there are reasons for that. If we all think back to when we were younger, you know, things were much different. I know that we span a few different generations in here. I suppose it's changed. [interjection] I'm not assigning an age shot to anybody, Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, at all. I think we all recognize that it seems a little bit more complicated these days to make these things work, and there are some reasons for that, and I'd like to ask the member about them and see what stakeholders have had to say.

In many growing communities like mine, for instance, in Chestermere-Rocky View we badly need these community hubs so that organizations like the one the member speaks of can succeed and offer programs, a place for communities to gather. I think it also would be wise of me to point out that this already happens in many of our constituencies. Whether it's a church group or a community meeting place, many jurisdictions do this well already.

Heritage language schools in Alberta, as the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood says, provide an important service to our communities, our education system. They do provide that support to a cultural or linguistic group, which is needed. They ensure that children, youth, adults can learn another language, sometimes more than one. It might not otherwise be available to them at school, and I think that's an important thing to point out. Heritage language schools I believe to be an asset. As a government, as a member of the opposition, whatever we are, I think we should be doing all we can to remove any barriers that might be stopping them from operating and offering their services to Albertans.

From this perspective, as I said, I'm certainly inclined to support this motion. I would like to hear from the member first

about a couple of questions that I do have. I think the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood did address a couple of them, and I'll get to those in a second.

We've heard today in the media and elsewhere about some of the problems that can come up by using the P3 approach to building schools, and I'll raise a legitimate point that applies to this member's motion today without going on a tangent which would be political in nature because my view differs from the government's on the issue of P3s. This point is relevant, Madam Speaker. It is more difficult – and you'll hear that from stakeholders and those boards and schools – for community groups to access P3s than it is for those from the traditional model. There are other rules in place.

Because they're maintained by other companies, you're not allowed to change the way things are. They don't want to see those facilities damaged or changed in any way, so it's become more complicated, it seems, to make those schools hubs for the community, and I think that's something we need to address going forward. The first batch, as I said, under the P3 model in this province did have some issues when it came to outside access groups. So I hope that we're able to address those, for both the member and the other groups that would like to use them.

Now, I did contact the member, I should mention, a few weeks ago – I didn't directly, but a research team did – to try to get some more information from him about the motion. Before I assign blame to him for not responding, I'll give him a chance to maybe let me know, but we did send a couple of e-mails, so I could have asked him a couple of these questions, Madam Speaker, beforehand.

I would like to know from a stakeholder perspective: do the school boards or school administrators have any issues with your motion? I'm sure the member has reached out to them. Are there any maintenance or liability questions that the boards might have? The maintenance and liability is another snag that we run into with the P3s. How will the government work with school boards to increase access to these school facilities?

You know, the more kids we have speaking more languages, the better off we're going to be, as the member points out. The more education we can provide, the more barriers we can remove to make that happen. I think it's a super idea. I'd just like the member to be able to address some of those questions, and I look forward to hearing his responses.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to debate Motion 513, which discusses the future of heritage language schools in Alberta. I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for bringing forward this motion.

Madam Speaker, as it stands today, heritage language schools in Alberta face many barriers to success which may inhibit their sustainability and their future, and through Motion 513 the hon. member has identified this hindrance as an unnecessary complication that he wishes to be addressed by this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, as we continue to build Alberta and open new markets abroad, it's hard to ignore that we are living in an increasingly globalized civilization and economy. Building lasting and favourable relationships with trading partners overseas: this is a key aspect to securing access to important markets. A part of building these relationships is developing a higher level of cultural

competence, including linguistic competence. This knowledge is supported by the very existence of heritage language schools.

Madam Speaker, this government has made a commitment to ensuring that our valuable resources get to market. Obtaining full market value prices for our resources ensures that Albertans are getting what's fair for our food and technology as well as for our energy products. This often means working with partners from the European Union to China or even to South Korea. Living in the reality of a globalized economy works to benefit all Albertans as well as our trading partners abroad.

5:20

Building these relationships also benefits the labour market right here in Alberta. Having more and more Albertans proficient in multiple languages also enhances the labour market. Albertans who take on multiple languages open their opportunities, whether it is for employment here or throughout the world.

Madam Speaker, given that Alberta is the best place in Canada to do business, our province has attracted much interest from business partners around the world. After all, exposing ourselves to another language not only builds understanding and expanded knowledge but fosters great friendships as well.

Heritage language schooling provides extracurricular educational opportunities to individuals who wish to learn another language and increase cultural competence.

Madam Speaker, Canada as a whole is a home to a plethora of different languages. This language diversity is illustrated by the more than 200 languages that were reported as a home language or mother tongue in 2011 according to reports from Statistics Canada. Nearly 6.6 million persons reported speaking a language other than English or French at home, and 20 per cent of the Canadian population speak another language at home. For 6.4 million Canadians this additional language was an immigrant language, meaning this language's presence is due to their family's relocating to Canada. Between 2006 and 2011 some immigrant languages have seen their numbers grow by more than 30 per cent and Mandarin, specifically, by more than 50 per cent.

Heritage language schooling, like the Southern Alberta Heritage Language Association, plays an important role in the development of many of these languages. For several decades these schools have helped hundreds of thousands of children and adults learn another language. Madam Speaker, language and cultural competency are instrumental to how we develop our strategic relationships and open new markets for Albertans.

Assisting heritage language schooling through the proposed Motion 513 could remove some of the barriers to success that these programs face. In doing so, Albertans could be more readily exposed to new opportunities to obtain cultural competency skills and even learn multiple languages.

I'd like to thank the hon. member for bringing this motion before the House for debate. Given the endless opportunities that multilingualism presents in developing relationships and opening new markets, I will be supporting this motion, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today to speak to Motion 513, the goal of which is to promote and assist heritage language schooling in collaboration with local school authorities. I would like to thank and congratulate the hon.

Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for bringing forward his very first motion in this House.

My experience as a mother with respect to second languages has been that it has given my children an opportunity beyond what some others may have had. No longer do our children have to exist and perform and live in Alberta, but they're children of the globe. So the more that we can give them the opportunities to learn second languages and third languages – I think that that should be encouraged in any way, shape, or form.

When my children were going into school, I certainly looked at having German as a language that they could learn. However, there was a huge obstacle to that with respect to transportation, so we chose French, but from that I certainly understand how obstacles can come in the way of ensuring that our children are as prepared as they can be for the future. Madam Speaker, language schools are confronted with a number of obstacles that can impede their success and inhibit their sustainability. The intent of this motion is to recognize the systemic problems that impair the ability of heritage language schools to run efficiently.

Madam Speaker, a heritage language school provides an extracurricular learning activity typically held on weekends for individuals who wish to learn another language and increase cultural awareness. Such schools operate throughout the province at the community level and represent many ethnicities. I think that it goes without saying that proficiency in more than one language and familiarity with a range of cultural practices are definitely assets in the global economy that we find ourselves in today, as I had mentioned earlier for my children.

Aside from the obvious economic benefits there are other practical advantages as well. We should not understate the importance of language schools and the learning they foster in promoting cultural awareness and cultivating an educated society. This is perhaps one of the most fundamental reasons for nurturing language education. At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, an investment in language education is an investment in families and communities. As Albertans we are fortunate to live in a land of rich diversity. We are privileged to be able to keep ties with our heritage and to pass on values, customs, and stories to our children.

Because Alberta is such an attractive place to work, live, and raise a family, we continue to be very appealing to immigrants who are new to Canada. With this steady influx of immigrants comes an increase in linguistic and cultural diversity. Thus, learning languages, while useful for international business and travel, is increasingly handy for everyday life right here at home in Alberta.

Learning French makes sense because, after all, Canada is an officially bilingual country. Learning French helps us to keep in mind the interconnectedness of this country despite its vast size and the sense of regionalism that that can instill. However, other than French we are blessed with opportunities to learn a multitude of languages. Languages such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, German, and Spanish are also highly relevant.

One of the many advantages of studying other languages and becoming fluent in them is the intellectual and mental benefit. Madam Speaker, there is scientific evidence as well to suggest that bilingual activity makes us smarter. It can have a surprisingly powerful impact on the brain, improving cognitive skills not related to language development and even helping to prevent dementia. It used to be assumed that bilingualism was a hindrance to cognitive development, as it was thought that thinking in two languages would be mutually obstructive. However, it has since been shown that this actually improves cognition by training the brain to essentially multitask and synthesize more diverse

information at once. Because of this, bilingualism helps to improve problem-solving skills.

Madam Speaker, this indicates that learning languages enables us to develop our ability to assess our environment in greater detail, which in turn allows us to be more adaptable. The advantages these types of practical skills give us are wide ranging and especially relevant in a dynamic and ever-changing society like our own.

So, Madam Speaker, as far as furthering educational as well as cultural goals, promoting language education is a win-win. Thankfully, the current standing of language education in Alberta is quite robust. As we can see, language is an important component of our society, and language education deserves to be taken seriously. As such, it is good to reassess what is currently in place, to streamline the delivery of that type of education to Albertans. Given the importance of heritage language schools in maintaining culture and promoting an educated society, I will be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to support this motion. It's an important one that is often lost in the complexity of our society and the focus on economic development. It's an awesome opportunity for us to strengthen the new Canadians, their capacity to connect, to communicate. Purely in health care we need all kinds of people to help translate issues relating to health care and health care needs, instructions, pharmaceutical programs, prescriptions. Obviously, we need these folks in all aspects of our economic development. They're going to be a huge driver for us.

5:30

In fact, I won't say too much more about this because I haven't seen enough of the motion yet to know a lot of the implications of it, but I look forward to this motion becoming a bill so that we ensure that we are funding and supporting, sustainably and in a stable fashion, the kinds of educational opportunities, the institutions that are needed, the sustainability that's needed year to year. It's an opportunity to show these folks that we're serious about the long-term commitment here to their psychological well-being, their intellectual well-being, their connection to other Canadians, the community-building aspects that happen around this whole activity as well as the cultural exchange that can happen when we actually can communicate better and understand and respect each other.

It looks like a wonderful opportunity to raise the level of awareness of this Legislature about this underfunded and relatively neglected area, that is only going to increase, and we need to make a serious commitment long term to this if we're all going to be successful, especially these new Canadians.

Thank you for bringing it forward. I look forward to seeing a bill in the not-too-distant future so that we can really strengthen our commitment to this sector.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and join the debate on Motion 513, proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood. I, too, wish to join my colleague and congratulate the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for his first motion and stellar work on this important issue.

As has been mentioned, this motion asks us to promote and assist heritage language schooling in collaboration with local school board authorities. Motion 513 also seeks to draw our attention to the need for adequate access to school facilities for heritage language school programs. Madam Speaker, as evidenced by our government's Building Alberta plan, we are committed to ensuring the best possible quality of education for our children. By building Alberta in this way, by investing in new schools, and by investing in our teachers, we are laying the groundwork for a brighter future. Our Building Alberta plan is working to construct greater opportunities for those who will one day come to inherit our province. It is for this reason that I offer my support for Motion 513.

As we urge our government to consider the benefits of heritage language school programs, it is helpful to examine what other jurisdictions have done and the strategies they employ towards language education. Ontario's international language program is particularly useful as a case study in this regard. This provincially mandated academic program has been offered by the continuing education department of the Ottawa-Carleton district school board since 1990.

The continuing education department offers the international languages program at both the elementary and secondary school levels. The elementary program offers language instruction in 39 different languages and involves 17 elementary schools. The program is eligible to all children who attend elementary school in Ontario. The secondary school program offers instruction for credit in 17 languages and is hosted by three secondary schools. The program is open to all students and adults, and the courses here are offered from grade 9 through grade 12. Currently there are over 5,000 students registered in this program. These numbers, Madam Speaker, lend important affirmation to the potential success that similar heritage language programs could have here in Alberta.

In terms of how Ontario came to legislate these international language programs, there are a couple of developments that are particularly enlightening with respect to our discussion here today. Before I highlight these developments, Madam Speaker, allow me to mention briefly that in 1993 the government of Ontario changed the terminology they used, when they moved from the phrase "heritage languages" to "international languages." I mention this only so we're not confused by the terms "heritage" and "international" in our discussion. For our purposes let's assume that both terms are interchangeable.

The Ontario Ministry of Education first enacted legislation that governed the offering of heritage language programs in elementary schools in 1989. Later, in 1991, this same ministry created the resource guide on heritage languages. The guide's aim was to assist boards in working with heritage language personnel and local communities to introduce language programs that met the specific needs of the schools and their students. The guide provided direction on delivery models, roles and responsibilities, program development, learning environments, and learning resources.

Madam Speaker, Ontario's work on international language programs recognizes the benefits and opportunities that such programs can offer. As has been mentioned already, languages open our society to a greater competitive advantage in the world market. The opportunity to learn another language or languages strengthens cognitive development. It allows us to meet and understand our neighbours, and it can prepare us for the responsibilities of being a productive member of our local, national, and international communities.

I believe Motion 513 has potential to offer another step in the right direction for assuming more of this important responsibility. Ontario's initiative, along with defining the value of language-learning opportunities, also sets parameters on the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the administration and delivery of these language programs. These roles include principal supervision and the appointment of an education officer, who develops, plans, budgets, co-ordinates, and monitors program activities. Other defined roles include site administrators, instructors, teachers, and also community representatives. More recently, in 2011, new policies brought in quota requirements which, once met, mandated that boards must establish the requested program. That program must also be offered for the entire school year as long as the quota stays intact.

Madam Speaker, language education offers us further opportunity to not only build bridges between Canadian and other cultures but to reveal and reinforce existing bridges already in us. It offers our children and their children the chance to learn and develop a robust understanding, a more empathetic understanding of one another. We can learn from Ontario's example. This is why I'm in support of Motion 513. It would continue to help us build a stronger, more resilient Alberta for future generations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak in support of this motion although with a bit of a cautionary component to my support.

In principle, I want to say that I and, I think, all members of my caucus support the growth of heritage and international language instruction programs, and we certainly support the growth of opportunities for people who are members of minority language communities to be able to gain access to useful and effective heritage language programs. I think the reason we support that is really for many of the reasons that have already been outlined by many of the speakers, not only in terms of increasing sort of the diversity and the levels of understanding and the employability and the competitiveness of our citizens, our citizens here in Alberta, but also, you know, for all the various and sundry learning outcomes which are improved by having someone participate successfully in heritage language or international language learning programs.

For that reason, I fully support the idea that's being brought here to the Legislature. I will say, as one of the previous speakers did point out, that the motion is a little vague right now. There are a couple of cautionary points that I would like to make. Even though I fully, fully support the idea of promoting these programs, I would like to outline some of the conditions which I think need to be in place.

First of all, if these programs are going to be supported through public resources and public support, then they need to be delivered in a nonprofit setting. One of the things I note from the motion is that that is not clear. For me, that's really important. As you know, our caucus is steadfastly opposed to private schooling and particularly steadfastly opposed to public dollars supporting private schooling. We're happy for people to choose to go to private schools, but if they do so, that should be their financial choice and not that of other taxpayers. That same thing applies generally to the notion of allocating public resources to what is otherwise a private, for-profit effort.

Of course, as much as heritage language instruction is something that I think should be done within the public context, I think

that we need to be mindful of the fact that when that starts to move into heritage language and also religious instruction, we can run into some challenges. We need to be mindful because it's not an entirely uncomplicated issue, and the issue has arisen in other contexts, so we need to be aware of that.

Again, though, I think that there is tremendous opportunity to open the door for greater commitments and obligations on the part of our public system for promoting and increasing access to heritage language instruction. I was reading one paper online as other people were speaking because I was trying to get myself up to speed on this, and I saw one author talk about linguistic imperialism that occurs when you have only one or two languages that everybody uses, and then the other languages and the communities and cultures associated with those other languages suffer as a result. I think that it's important to do everything that we can to work against that trend and to promote genuine diversity.

5:40

The only other thing that I would suggest as something that we would need to be conscious of, of course, is that we are currently in a situation where we are profoundly shortchanging our school boards. We are asking them to do a great number of things for a great number of people with an ever-reducing pot, and a huge array of demands is being put on how they are going to use that pot, particularly as it relates to capital construction and the allocation of their capital resources within communities. Those demands are being put on them already by this government, often as part of other policies which, potentially, the school boards don't support as they respond to the demands and the requests of their communities.

All I would suggest is that we not put ourselves in the position where, for instance, we're saying to school boards that their extra space is going to be counted against them. They're not allowed to actually lease that extra space at market rate, and then they have to give it to someone at a low rate. The government has decided who that someone will be, and then they turn around and use the fact that there's that extra space against the school, and the school doesn't get the benefit of that use being calculated into the value of that school to the community, to the neighbourhood, to the overall process of community development.

What I think needs to be happening is that whatever effort is ultimately directed to this strategy be done truly in consultation with the school boards and with a view to understanding the somewhat untenable position that this government has put many school boards in with respect to their space, the quality of the space, the degree to which it needs maintenance, and then the costs associated with making that space available to the community. I think school boards want to do that, but it's not enough for the government to say: oh, yeah, you've got to make sure you pay all this extra staff, and you've got to do all this extra work on this building to ensure that the community has access, but we're not going to give you an extra dollar for it. That's the kind of thing that we have got to make sure we don't do more of because, of course, we're already making demands which are pretty unreasonable in many cases.

That being said, though, those are particular issues, and those are the cautionary issues, but they are merely cautionary because, as I say, I do support the promotion and support of more access to heritage and international language programs within Alberta and within the public system or at the very least on a non-profit basis, where no additional funds are being asked from the people who would access those programs and being paired with government funds. That's, of course, an opportunity to increase the proliferation

of public funding of private schools, which, I would argue, is a bad thing. But I think we can achieve this educational objective while preserving the integrity of our public school system, and with those points in mind I support the motion made by the hon. member.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to rise and make a few comments about this motion. The first thing I'd like to say is to just commend the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for the work that he's done on this and to navigate it through. I know it's seen a couple of different iterations, and he took a lot of feedback from many different people and worked with people in this community and his colleagues, and I think he deserves a lot of credit for the passion he's shown here.

There are others, too, that have been very supportive of heritage language schools, and I think of the MLA for Calgary-Northern Hills and the MLA for Calgary-Greenway and several others of our caucus who have helped push this to the fore. If nothing else, I think they've done a great job of raising the profile on how important the heritage language schools are and the great work that the heritage language school organizations are doing right across the province.

You know, as I read this and as I listen and talk with the member, it really is about collaboration and trying to work between the department and these organizations and the school boards to make sure that these organizations have proper access to facilities. There's nothing wrong with that, of course. We should be doing that on a daily basis anyway. I want to say that Education does support the heritage language schools, and these schools offer credits in courses in language and cultural programs. We also provide funding to support community heritage language programs. Most of these are through the funding that goes for the credits. These language schools are encouraged to investigate opportunities not only with the local school boards but also with community organizations and other partners in order to support their programming. It doesn't need to be just schools that they operate out of.

You know, one of the things we heard many times through Inspiring Ed is that Albertans are challenging us to get out of the schooling business and into the education business. Our focus is really on breaking down the barriers, blurring the lines between K to 12 and postsecondary and industry, and also blurring the lines between the school and the community so that we're bringing the community into the school and taking the school out into the community and so that those learning opportunities are relevant for those kids and aren't just tied to the traditional rules of: it has to be delivered between the hours of 9 to 3 or inside those four walls or in some cases by a certificated teacher. We'll be pushing the envelope of who can actually instruct our kids because if it's putting students first and it's about their experience and about learning, then the hours of 9 to 3 and those four walls can't be a barrier to that. Embracing the work that the heritage language schools and others are doing is important.

Part of that is happening already, and I don't want to leave the impression that schools and school boards are not doing this today. It may be that we can always get better. They do it today, and they do it typically on a cost-recovery basis, and sometimes there are issues with access, but we encourage the schools because they're paid for by the taxpayer, and there's one taxpayer. Their objective is learning, so if we can make those facilities open and usable and welcoming for other members of the community, other

groups, and other learning experiences, we want to see that happen. But we don't expect school boards to just do that for free all the time. They have costs that they need to recover, whether it's custodial costs or whether it's to have somebody on-site or whether it's some of the insurance. I know that typically they don't recover the costs for the utilities and a lot of those things for the after-hours use.

We do want to see them as hubs of the community. We do want to see them used as much as possible, not just by heritage language schools, as important as they are, but by any other groups that want to use that infrastructure that's been paid for by the taxpayer. You know, the member opposite raised a good point. One thing we don't provide today is lease support for private schools, so if these opportunities are being given to for-profit private schools, we just always have to be careful about setting precedents where we're going to pay for their capital or pay for their leases, which is something we don't do as a policy decision in this province even though private schools do an incredible amount of good work.

I just commend the member, and I don't think there's anything wrong with this motion. It takes us further down a path we're already heading. We need to continue to collaborate, and it's never a bad thing to collaborate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any more members who wish to speak on the motion? Seeing none, I would go to Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the motion to close debate. I invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood to close debate on Motion 513.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the hon. members in the House for your input, suggestions, and questions. It is very helpful for me to learn all the aspects of this issue, but I'm also very humbled to get a sense that the support across the floor has been very strong to set a motion to give some direction and support to this very important issue in our province.

I wanted to acknowledge that the motion we're talking about today is really high level. It's just emphasizing that language education is important. We need to work in collaboration with school boards, and we need to take the maximum opportunity to promote and encourage the development of heritage language schools.

5:50

I heard many, many specific references to how we go about that and so on and so forth. Unfortunately, this motion won't go into that much detail, but I do take your advice wholeheartedly. I do remember that I have a private member opportunity. I may bring this up again. By then, those specific issues will be dealt with at that level.

I want to thank you again for your support and for participating in this debate. Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts. I want to remind hon. members that what we're discussing today has a very long influence in our province because you are giving a direction as to how we approach this issue. You are giving some support in terms of how we promote this, how we work together on this, and for that I want to thank you so much. I want to remind you that this is not something small. You are touching the lives of 1 in 5 Albertans and beyond. For that reason, I thank you once again. I urge you to support this motion and get it passed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 513 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Given the lateness of the hour I would move that we call it 6 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:52 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	
Mr. Edwin Albert Oman, August 31, 1930, to September 19, 2013	2479
Mr. Richard Arthur Miller, July 23, 1960, to October 26, 2013	2479
Mr. Paul Joseph Lorieau, June 29, 1942, to July 2, 2013	2479
Introduction of Visitors	2479, 2494
Introduction of Guests	2480, 2506
Ministerial Statements	
Flood in Southern Alberta	2481
Statement by the Speaker	
Oral Question Period and Members' Statements Speaker Rotation	2483
Oral Question Period	
Health Care Wait Times	2483, 2490
Flood Recovery Contracts	2484
Provincial Debt	2485
Minister of Municipal Affairs	2485
Flood Mitigation	2486
Ethics Investigations	2486
Government Policies	2487
School Construction	2488
Postsecondary Education Funding	2488
Municipal Charters	2489
Education Funding	2489
Firearm Collection by Emergency Responders	2490
Emergency Medical Service Response Times	2490
Trade with China	2491
Members' Statements	
Official Opposition and Government Policies	2492
Official Opposition Policies	2492
Flood Recovery	2492
Calgary Southwest Ring Road	2493
Calgary Zoo Flood Recovery	2493
Mr. Richard Arthur Miller	2493
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	2494, 2495
Notices of Motions	2495
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 27, Flood Recovery and Reconstruction Act	2495
Bill 28, Modernizing Regional Governance Act	2495
Bill 29, Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2013	2495
Bill 31, Protecting Alberta's Environment Act	2496
Tabling Returns and Reports	2496
Request for Emergency Debate	
Home Care Services	2499
Orders of the Day	2505
Written Questions	
Legal Actions against the Ministry of Energy	2505
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Heritage Language Schooling	2506

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